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# CURRENT PROBLEMS

General Editor:

ERNEST BARKER, LITT.D.



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EDUCATION FOR  
A WORLD ADrift

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# EDUCATION FOR A WORLD ADrift

BY

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## PREFACE

ENGLAND has probably never been so interested in education as to-day. There are many reasons; the obvious and increasing importance of knowledge to life; a sense of the great possibilities of modern civilisation and of its disorders and dangers; the perception that our democracy is very ill-educated; a realisation that in foreign politics between 1919 and 1939 we have thrown away a great victory with a rapidity and completeness perhaps unexampled in history and that this has been partly due to political ignorance; the need of extending education if equality of opportunity is to be more than a phrase. These considerations have interested all classes in education and forced it into the foreground. So everyone is talking about the subject, our educational system is being reviewed, and a great development of it is imminent. All this is to the good; the tide is setting in strongly and may carry us far up the shore of our need and desire. But it will not do so unless we have the right education as well as the right educational system, and we sometimes forget that these are different, though related, things.

Much of the present interest in education is

political or social rather than educational. I was speaking recently about education to a large working-class audience. Their keenness was inspiring, their criticism acute and searching. But their interest was wholly in one side of the problem, in the provision of proper educational facilities, in equality of opportunity, in securing a fair chance to every child, irrespective of the position or means of its parents. They wanted more education, but did not ask what it was to teach. They were deeply concerned about the residential school, but concerned that the poor should have the same access to it as the well-to-do and not with its educational merits or defects. Their interest was in no sense mercenary; they were not thinking of education as a road to better-paid jobs: they wanted fair play for all, and they were anxious to get the educational system which would achieve this.

This attitude is natural and right. In an age of social change and in a society like our own where opportunity has hitherto not been equal, the problem of equal opportunity demands to be solved and rightly fills the mind. But there is a danger that it may overfill it, engross the attention with educational machinery and make us so concerned with providing schools that we do not consider what is to be taught inside them. Machinery is indispensable to education, but when

it has been provided the bigger problem of education remains and begins. What are we to teach? At what should our education aim? 'What sort of human beings should it produce? These questions might interest us more.

The knowledge necessary to living must be imparted. People must be taught to use their brains. We are aware of both these needs. But there is something still more essential to which less attention is paid. Knowledge is important, still more so is the power to use it; but most important of all is what a man believes, what he thinks good and bad, whether he has clear values and standards and is prepared to live by them. Paradox as it may sound, this matters more to the making of a new world, and to its preservation, even than equality of opportunity. But of this all-important side of education—doubly important in a world of shaken beliefs and uncertain values—we hear very little. Speeches, conferences, the educational press are more occupied with educational machinery than with education. Nursery schools, raising of the school age, part-time continued education, adult study—these fill the papers, and are essential, but are not enough. As Plato said, the noblest of all studies is the study of what man should be and how he should live. It is also the most important of all studies: do we give it enough attention?

Every age has a blind eye and sees nothing wrong in practices and institutions which its successors view with just horror. The eighteenth century complacently accepted the penal laws; we have only recently discovered the absurdity and injustice of leaving three-quarters of the population without any education after the age of 14. Perhaps our grandchildren, amazed at abuses and errors which we do not notice, may say of us: 'How blind that generation was to its real problem—the human being! They boasted that science had unified the world. So indeed it had, with the result that German submarines could sink ships off the coasts of America, that wireless could carry propaganda to any country in any continent, and that men were looking forward to the day when aircraft could bomb New York from Europe and Europe from New York. They never saw that the only real unity is spiritual and that however great the advantage of being able to cross the Atlantic in eight hours, co-operation depends not on rapid transport, but on common ideals. They were conscious of the defects in their commercial and industrial system, but though their standards and values were far more chaotic, they did nothing to remedy the chaos. So their peace-time civilisation was both impressive and depressing; the unlimited means at their disposal were largely misused. Their education did little

to help them. It was like a half-assembled motor-car; most of the parts were there, but they were not put together. Reformers wished to base it on science and technology, or on sociology and economics, whose importance they saw; if they had had their way, they would have produced a good chassis, but overlooked the need of an engine—not to speak of a driver who knew where to go. The real problem lay deeper than science or sociology or politics; it was spiritual. They were dimly aware of it, but, in the English way, they averted their eyes from a difficult and embarrassing question; as some sufferers from cancer avoid consulting a doctor till it is too late. It is not surprising that in the end war tore their civilisation to pieces.' There would be some justice in such a comment.

We have fine material to work on—a good racial stock, a sound national character hammered out through a thousand years on the anvil of history. In the past, spiritual forces, of which Christianity is the chief, have done much to control and direct the country, but these forces, which at all times fight an uphill battle, have lost ground; and in proportion as they lose it, life loses direction and purpose, and character becomes a habit whose roots are dead, a house whose foundations are sapped. Here is our biggest need; the need of values and standards which

are more than mere habits, which go down below the soil of custom into the rock of clear conviction and are founded in a philosophy of life. The English have never been fond of the idea of anything that could be called a philosophy; they have their virtues and are content with them. But ultimately virtues depend on beliefs, and though sound habits are admirable, it is dangerous to rely on them in an age of change. Our real problem lies deeper than politics, science, or economics, and in the absence of a spiritual ideal we shall never solve it. If we go on as at present, we shall probably decline into an economic religion, worshipping material prosperity in a more or less refined form. Such a religion is inglorious and, because it does not satisfy the deeper needs of human nature, short-lived.

This book attempts to raise the problem, discussing its nature (Chapter I)—how far our education deals with it (Chapter II)—the use of history and literature in forming values and standards (Chapter III)—the basis of a spiritual philosophy of life (Chapter IV). Chapter V deals with the obstacles presented by the examination system and over-specialisation; Chapter VI, with education for citizenship. I have had higher education primarily in mind, and have assumed that in the future every citizen will receive this through part-time and adult education if not otherwise;

but clearly much of what is here said applies *mutatis mutandis* to elementary education.

The last chapter was delivered as the Seth Memorial Lecture at Edinburgh University and parts of the first as the Aneurin Williams Memorial Lecture. Some passages in the book appeared in an article in *The Round Table*. Professor Ernest Barker and Sir Alfred Zimmern read the book in typescript and helped me with valuable suggestions.

December 1942

R. L.

δεῖ μανθάνειν καὶ συνεθίζεσθαι μηδὲν οὕτως ὥς τὸ  
κρίνειν ὀρθῶς καὶ χαίρειν τοῖς ἐπιείκεσιν ἡθεσι καὶ  
ταῖς καλαῖς πράξεσιν.

Aristotle, *Politics* viii. 5. 17.

No lesson is so important to learn, and no habit  
is so important to acquire, as a right judgment  
and a delight in fine characters and noble  
actions.



# EDUCATION FOR A WORLD ADRIFT

## CHAPTER I

### THE PROBLEM

A RIVER is always flowing; over most of its reaches the flow is so slow and peaceful that the direction of the current can hardly be discerned and may even be mistaken, but at times the stream bed falls rapidly and it hurries in a turmoil of broken water. As with rivers, so with the individual; change is always taking place, but only at certain periods of life can it be clearly perceived. There are times when a human being alters quickly and perceptibly: we met him one summer and he was much the same as when we saw him last. We meet him six months later and he has undergone a visible change; he has grown up, we say, or matured, or developed, or become old; he has become a different being, or he is not the man he was. So too with the State. It is always changing, for the most part imperceptibly. You cannot, as Heraclitus said, step twice into the same river: nor is England or any of us quite what we were a year ago. But there come times when the nature or the pace of change is such that no one can mistake it. It is the fate of this generation to live in such an

age. England in the next ten or twenty years will become a very different country from what it was yesterday, even from what it is to-day.

If you ask me what this change is, I should say that it is the decisive appearance of a new character on the stage: a new class is taking a main rôle in the play. Our generation is seeing the same kind of phenomenon as occurred in the fifteenth, the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries—a radical change. At the close of the fifteenth century the monarch achieved a domination which lasted some hundred years; in the seventeenth century, after a moment when it seemed as if something like English democracy might be established, power passed into the hands of an upper class; with the Reform Bill the middle classes took control; to-day it is the turn of what we compendiously call 'the masses', and government of the people, for the people, is in sight, if not here. It is not an isolated phenomenon; such a change belongs to the spirit of the age; it can be seen in the Russian revolution, and it is bound to come in all educated countries. For fundamentally it is the result of education. Marx would have traced it to economic causes, and doubtless these have contributed. But the real cause is education. As soon as you begin to educate people, you teach them, however feebly, to use their reason. The more intelligent can use it effectively, the less intelligent will at any rate have

an idea what the more intelligent are saying. And as soon as people begin to think, they will among other questions ask themselves: 'Why should there be such inequalities in life; in particular why should the children of some people have inadequate food, living conditions, education, etc., while the children of others, whatever their brains or character, have secure access not only to the necessities of a good life but to the superfluities of a luxurious one?' As soon as this simple question is asked by a sufficient number of people, social change begins; it is the lever which has set change in motion to-day. The answer is infinitely less simple than the question; summary solutions to the problem would only aggravate it and leave the world far worse off than it is. I do not know a solution and shall not attempt to suggest one. I merely wish to emphasise that Britain is going through a period of social and political change as great and difficult as it went through at the Reformation and in the seventeenth century and in the period of the Industrial Revolution and the Reform Bill.

The adventurous, the romantic, the heroic can count themselves fortunate to live at such a time; they are not born out of due season; the time may be out of joint but they will never say

O cursed spite  
That ever we were born to set it right.

The majority, in whose nature these qualities are less richly mixed, may regret that they were not born earlier or later, but they may feel that this is a situation to which the words apply which Socrates used of life, καλὸν τὸ ἄθλον καὶ ἡ ἔλπις μεγάλη—‘noble is the prize and our hope is great’.

Our hope is great, for the country has been through such storms before and has survived them. There were times in the sixteenth and the seventeenth and the early nineteenth centuries when things looked far darker. And the prize is a noble one. We have a great task and a great opportunity. Our revolution will not bring the millennium, which is the Mrs Harris of politicians—constantly appealed to but never seen. It may alter England for the worse; for such changes must shake and may destroy existing traditions and values, but fail to replace them by better ones. In any case, it will have drawbacks, defects and losses to set against gains. But an alteration in the balance of English life is as inevitable now as it was in the days of the Reform Bill; it has been proceeding for the last thirty years and must be completed; and it is just. Our business is to see it is carried out in the spirit of justice—not as a competition between the selfishness of the rich and the selfishness of the poor, but as an attempt to create a better civilisation. The prize is noble. This ship of Britain carries

a crew of more than forty million human beings whose future depends on the issue of the voyage, and a freight of ideals, traditions, virtues, which have enriched humanity in the past and have not lost their power or use. If we weather the storm, not only shall we preserve the ship for new voyages of wider range, but we may again teach the world the greatest of political lessons—how to carry out a revolution without bloodshed or injustice, with a minimum of hardship and a maximum of gain. In Pitt's words, we may save ourselves by our exertions and Europe by our example.

The task facing us has two sides, different though interdependent. We have to build a house for the new world to inhabit, to create the framework of material civilisation, which social and political changes require and which the new knowledge puts at our command. It is an age of science and applied science and we must make full use of them. Therefore, to profit by our opportunity, it is essential that we should have enough scientists and technologists, and equally necessary that our politicians, civil servants, business men and general public should appreciate the value and uses of science. (This is different from being actually trained in science, though it is generally confused with it; because a nation needs a sufficient supply of chemists and physicists, it does not mean that we should all be physicists and chemists.) Nor is

it only scientists and awareness of science that we need. Economics, administration, foreign policy, social organisation, cannot be left to the half knowledge and bright ideas of the amateur, as they were so largely left in the last century. The foundation of the Royal Institute of International Affairs is a witness to our need; it is surprising that the need for it was not realised till 1919; and it is even more surprising that there is nothing comparable to it for the study of Social and Political Science and that these studies should still be comparatively unorganised. When we come to provide the political, social and industrial machinery necessary, if the society of to-morrow is to express itself and function efficiently, we are likely to regret not having made systematic provision for its study: we shall be in the position of an army that takes the field without a General Staff. Expert knowledge is the obvious need of our infinitely complicated hive. So much is generally agreed; and there most people would stop. Enough science, enough economics, enough sociology, and the hive will settle down to an era of abundant and increasing honey. It might, if we were bees and not creatures of far more irrational and stormy passions, uncontrolled by mere knowledge, unsatisfied by honey-combs however full.

Our task has another side which is even more important. There is no better summary of the

problem of society than nine Greek words, which in English can be translated: 'The State comes into existence for the sake of life, it exists for the sake of the good life.' This clear and simple analysis of the problem is characteristically Greek, and we should do well continually to bear it in mind and not, in our legitimate efforts to secure what Aristotle calls 'life', forget that the State 'exists for the sake of the good life'. That elementary fact is easily ignored. 'New orders' are apt to have an economic bias. But it is possible to achieve peace, material prosperity, and abolition of unemployment, and yet have a civilisation of little value: as we are reminded by Mr T. S. Eliot's epitaph on our comfortable suburbs:

A Cry from the North, from the West and from the South:

Whence thousands travel daily to the timekept City,  
Where My Word is unspoken.

In the land of lobelias and tennis flannels

The rabbit shall burrow and the thorn revisit,

The nettle shall flourish on the gravel court,

And the wind shall say: 'Here were decent godless people:

Their only monument the asphalt road

And a thousand lost golf balls.'

Here the spread of democracy will not necessarily help us; indeed it makes our task more difficult. To call the masses into power is to dilute existing culture. They must be humoured and

satisfied; attention must be paid to their interests and tastes, and if these are trifling, ignoble and base, the level of civilisation will fall. There is good democracy: there is also the democracy which Mussolini described as 'a social order in which a degenerate mass has no other care than to enjoy the ignoble pleasures of vulgar men'; as it was said of the masses under the Roman Empire that 'the once sovereign people has thrown its cares to the winds, limits its ambitions and only asks anxiously for two things, bread and the games of the Circus'.<sup>1</sup> It is easy to translate *panem et Circenses* into modern equivalents—free bread and free amusements, doles and the dogs. The spread of democracy may mean cultural decline. Plato said: 'Political constitutions are made not from wood and stone but from the dispositions of their citizens, which turn the scale and draw everything in their wake',<sup>2</sup> and already we have seen the influence of the masses drawing our civilisation in their wake. The newspapers of to-day with the biggest circulation are on a lower level than any published fifty years ago. In the last century there were no football pools, no nation-wide organisation of betting, no litter nuisance; the drama may have been poor, but it did not fall so low as most films of our time. Do not blame the masses for this; blame the newspaper proprietors, the film magnates, the organisers

<sup>1</sup> Juvenal, 10. 80.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 544.



of pools; and let us blame ourselves, who have left the masses without the higher education which might have given them an antidote to the poison. We have called a new class on to the stage, but done little to prepare it for its rôle.

The clearest condemnation of our pre-war civilisation is that though the war has destroyed much of it, we have little to regret except some beautiful buildings, and are a better people leading better lives than in peace. If our civilisation disappeared utterly, and archaeologists excavating our rubbish heaps 1000 years hence had to reconstruct it from the remains of the cheap newspapers, films and advertisements, which reflect the amusements and desires of most of the population, they would probably class the pre-war world with the decadence of the Roman Empire. Comparing us with the Middle Ages which built cathedrals and churches, they would label the twentieth century 'the cinema-building age'. If the reviews of novels in that admirable paper *The Times Literary Supplement* had survived to show the tastes of the educated class, the future historian would be surprised at a society apparently interested by a succession of sex adventures, books on Byron's 'loves' and biographies of the major and minor courtesans of history: he might suppose that, though presumably all of our novelists had read Shakespeare and some had read Homer, many of them found their ideal

of woman in the unchaste maidservants of Odysseus rather than in Nausicaa and Penelope, in Cressida and Helen rather than in Portia or Beatrice: and he might head his chapter on pre-war novels with the contemptuous comment of Thersites in *Troilus and Cressida*: 'What's become of the wenching rogues? . . . But in a sort lechery eats itself.' Certainly he would wonder that Shakespeare's nation produced so many writers who were without his sense of good and evil; and ask why, in the crisis of European civilisation, the intellectuals ridiculed, denounced or deplored the weaknesses of their time but had not the faith or constructive power to see a vision of better things that might have renewed it.

No doubt I am putting one side of the case. But it is a very important side. If we were looking for a catchword to describe our age, various phrases would occur to the mind: we might call it the Age of Science, or the Age of Social Revolution, or the Age without Standards. None would be exhaustive, none quite just; but the last would have some claim to consideration. That may seem a hard judgment. For our age has great virtues; they were present in peace, they have been revealed to the world and to ourselves by the war. Our weakness is that good and evil are mixed together and that the tares not only grow among the wheat but are not distinguished from it.

Look at any issue of our cheap daily papers in peace-time and you will see what I mean; or take an instance from *Life*, a journal which has excellent and serious articles in it, and then, among all this first-rate matter, the following description of a popular entertainment: 'His formula for production is to hire top-notch stars and composers, set them off in a gilt-edged production, keep the comedy loud and lewd. By this formula Mr. —'s shows are now grossing over \$90,000 a week.' That is American; but this description applies to other besides American shows. To what degradation has a society fallen, which not only has such amusements but speaks of them without a sense of shame; among whose characteristic phrase-coinages are 'strip-tease' and 'sex appeal'! How strange that such things should appear, without any sense of incongruity, in a high-class paper! That is what I mean by saying that this generation might be called 'The Age without Standards'.

The life without standards exists in all epochs, but it is the peculiar danger of a rich society at whose feet every kind of facility, distraction and pleasure are poured in indiscriminate profusion. Commercialism helps the chaos. For the aim of commerce is not to sell what is best for people or even what they really need, but simply to sell: its final standard is successful sale. Such a society breeds the type which Plato calls the 'democratic'

man, behind the lineaments of whose portrait, drawn more than 2000 years ago, we discern a contemporary face:

He spends as much time and pains and money on his superfluous pleasures as on the necessary ones.... He sets all his pleasures on a footing of equality, denying to none equal rights and maintenance, and allowing each in turn, as it presents itself, to succeed to the government of his soul until it is satisfied. When he is told that some pleasures should be pursued and valued as arising from desires of a higher order, others chastised and enslaved because the desires are base, he will shut the gates of the citadel against the messengers of truth, shaking his head and declaring that one appetite is as good as another and all must have their equal rights. So he spends his days indulging the pleasure of the moment, now intoxicated with wine and music, and then taking to a spare diet and drinking nothing but water; one day in hard training, the next doing nothing at all, the third apparently immersed in study. Every now and then he takes a part in politics, and jumps to his feet to say or do whatever comes into his head. Or he will set out to rival someone whom he admires, a soldier perhaps, or, if the fancy takes him, a man of business.<sup>1</sup>

Such a character is not wholly bad. It has moments of energy and intermittent spurts of goodness, but the desire or ambition of the moment masters it—now sex, now money, now something else, and it makes no distinction between good and bad, because it has no standards, no principle to rule

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 561.

and discipline it. 'Such a man's life', as Plato says, 'is subject to no order or restraint, and he has no wish to change an existence which he calls pleasant, free and happy.' But of all lives the life without standards is the most ignoble and barren, sweet in the mouth but bitter in the belly.

In this portrait of a fourth-century Athenian we see a phenomenon of our own age, the same indiscriminate mixture of good and bad, everything by turns and nothing long; as if the world was a department store, where men wandered from counter to counter, buying now goods of the highest quality and now mere junk. That is our peace-time world; not a civilisation but the raw material of one, something wholly inadequate either to the resources at our command or to the capacities of human nature, a moral anarchy waiting for some overruling ideal to discipline and order it. Without such an ideal we play a game of blind man's buff, where the blind player, plucked this way and that, turns irresolutely first in one direction, then in another and catches nobody. That weakness extends from life at home to policy abroad. Here, the autocracies have had the quick decision and concentrated energy which spring from a clearly seen ideal and are impossible without it. What have been the marks of England and America in their pre-war years? Slowness to move, wavering purpose, uncertainty of aim,

'safety first'. The initiative has been with others, and we have waited till they forced us to decide and act. In the struggle between Germany and the democratic countries 'something whole-hearted has faced the half-hearted' and our weakness has imperilled and still imperils not only the things we hold dearest but the future of the world. Democracy has not commanded the spiritual forces necessary for its task or even for its safety. It is not our fortune, or democracy, or even its political leaders that are to blame. The fault lies far deeper: it

is not in our stars

But in ourselves, that we are underlings.

'To will anything thoroughly', says a modern writer, 'demands asceticism, that is life-long devotion to a single ideal carefully selected.... Will always conquers culture, when it is mere culture and not Christianity which brings concentration, determination, energy and supernatural reinforcement.'<sup>1</sup> The Germans have had the single ideal, the asceticism, the will; we have had culture without Christianity; or—for that is too hard a judgment—our will and our religion have been impaired, overlaid and confused. For the moment war has disciplined us, imposing standards and forcibly cutting out of life things which in peace-time disgraced it, compelling us to understand the

<sup>1</sup> Foerster, *Europe and the German Question*, p. 70.

saying 'Strait is the gate and narrow is the way which leads to life'. We have accepted perforce the narrowing of our way, and so far are nearer to the road to life. The country is united for a great purpose, in which no doubt our interests are involved but which far transcends them, and for which practically every member of the nation is ready to sacrifice pleasure, comfort, ease and life—many have sacrificed all. If that spirit lasted after the war, what an England, what a world we might have! But will it last when the urgency passes and the road broadens and we can walk where and as we will?

There we have the major task of this generation; how to find a principle to rule life, and firm footing in the turbid flux of modern civilisation with its films, its motor cars, its advertisements, its commercialism, its showy and seductive abundance of all that the childish, acquisitive heart of man desires.

To be successful, we must realise that we are in the midst of two revolutions: a social and economic and political revolution; but also a spiritual revolution—the weakening or dissolution of the traditions and beliefs which for many centuries have ruled Western civilisation and held it together. This revolution has been partly assisted and partly concealed from us by other shocks and revolutions which pressed more insistently on the attention;

by the war; by class conflict and social change; by science transforming the economic system, disclosing possibilities which outrun imagination, and suggesting a new, materialist interpretation of life (which, however, is as old as the fourth century B.C.).

Throughout the nineteenth century, England had, so far as any country ever had such a thing, a definite philosophy of life, to which Christianity contributed most, but which was reinforced, to a far greater degree than is generally realised, by the clear and noble ideals of Hellenism, through the classical education received by the governing classes. It would be difficult to find any leaders of the age whose outlook on life was uninfluenced, if not formed, by one of these. In some, like Shaftesbury and Bright, Christianity was dominant; in others, like Mill and Morley, Hellenism; in Gladstone, Newman and Jowett the two streams met. But Christian ideals deeply influenced even those like Carlyle, George Eliot, Matthew Arnold and many others, who rejected Christianity. Indeed it was impossible to escape the influence of beliefs which filled the atmosphere and in which almost everyone was brought up. No country is ever permeated through and through by its religion; human nature is too varied, frail and rebellious, and its spiritual dress, even if it purports to be of a single material, is more or less stained and patched.



The nineteenth century, like all ages, was polytheistic, but it had a less mixed crowd of deities than the twentieth, transferred its allegiance far less lightly, and as a whole it acknowledged, even where it did not profess, a great religion. The nation as a whole had a philosophy of life which might be called Christian; it had a common belief and common standard of conduct; and at the lowest it was governed by the ideal of respectability, the indispensable virtue of our fathers. The nineteenth century had a soul, a spirit: what soul, what spirit, has ours? The child of the Victorian age was born into a world of stable traditions and clear standards and was shaped from birth in their strong moulds. The child of to-day is born into a world whose traditions and standards are weakened, a world with inherited good habits, but no ruling philosophy of life. Through the last and still more the present century, the solid and impressive mansion which had been slowly built up through centuries of Christian belief, was steadily bombed.

Who dropped the bombs? Some would say, Science. But it would be more accurate to attribute the damage to the spirit of criticism which was at work long before, but in the twentieth century gathered momentum and threw off restraint. My own university education fell at the turn of the century and there is a strong contrast between the

books read by my generation and by its successors. In my shelves, rows of books by Carlyle, Ruskin, Matthew Arnold, George Meredith, John Morley, Pater, Stevenson, Froude, date from my undergraduate days and indicate some of the influences, which, outside our ordinary studies, presumably formed my mind, and, I think, the minds of most of my contemporaries. Few of the present generation knows much more than the names of any of them except perhaps Matthew Arnold and Stevenson, and, when I was a young tutor, they had already been replaced by Shaw, Wells, Arnold Bennett and Galsworthy, to whom, after the last war, was added Aldous Huxley, a profounder and more acute mind than any of them. I do not say *that Carlyle and Ruskin were major prophets, but they were prophets*. That word could not be applied to Shaw, or Aldous Huxley, or Galsworthy. For prophets have two marks. They must be critics; all the Victorian writers were that; Arnold or Ruskin were as critical of their age as any modern. But the positive element must outweigh the critical. Prophets criticise because they wish to reconstruct; the positive element in them far outweighs the negative; cynicism and flippancy are words they do not know; a vision of better things dominates their mind and drives them on; *their denunciations spring from an intense faith*; and behind the evils which they wish to destroy

risers the vision of a new heaven and a new earth, the new Jerusalem descending from God out of heaven. None of these things can be said of the great sophists of the last forty years, men of lively minds, keen interest in ideas, and with the gift of expression, who were read by the large educated public. They are essentially critics who have destroyed with great success but have constructed nothing; not even H. G. Wells, a man of constructive instincts, an eighteenth-century encyclopaedist, born out of due season.

Another contrast between the great Victorians and their successors is revealed in some words of George Meredith: 'I strive by study of humanity to represent it; not its morbid action. I have a tendency to do that, which I repress; for, in delineating it, there is no gain....Much of my strength lies in painting morbid emotion and exceptional positions, but my conscience will not let me so waste my time....My love is for epical subjects, not for cobwebs in a putrid corner; though I know the fascination of unravelling them.' The same sense of values to be preserved, of conscience in choice and treatment of a subject, appears in Kipling's *The Rabbi's Song* and in Thomas Hardy's *He resolves to say no more*. There is little trace of it in many writers of a later time, the Age without Standards, who have followed a precisely opposite principle.

A generation educated under these influences bears their mark, and is better trained for destroying an old world than for building a new one. There is no virtue in being uncritical; nor is it a habit to which the young are given. But criticism is only the burying beetle that gets rid of what is dead, and, since the world lives by creative and constructive forces, and not by negation and destruction, it is better to grow up in the company of prophets than of critics. There is a sonnet by Robert Bridges which has no title, but of which the real subject is education:

Who builds a ship must first lay down the keel  
Of Health whereto the ribs of Mirth are wed:  
And knit, with beams and knees of Strength, a bed  
For decks of Purity, her floor and ceil.  
Upon her masts, Adventure, Pride and Zeal,  
To fortune's wind the sails of Purpose spread:  
And at the prow make figured Maidenhead  
O'erride the seas and answer to the wheel.

And let him deep in memory's hold have stor'd  
Water of Helicon: and let him fit  
The needle that doth true with heaven accord:  
Then bid her crew, Love, Diligence and Wit  
With Justice, Courage, Temperance come aboard,  
And at her helm the master Reason sit.

Such vessels are not built in the shipyard of Messrs Shaw, Lytton Strachey, Aldous Huxley & Co.

The twentieth century was an age of demolition, in which only two forces were constructive.

## THE PROBLEM

Commerce and Industry built up their great undertakings, as solid-seeming as the vast buildings which house them, and, like these, things of a day: Science laboured steadily at a more enduring creation: her palaces, firmly based, rise with steady growth to ever newer heights, and, like the giants of legend, her workers pile Ossa on Olympus and Pelion on Ossa, that men may climb to heaven:

Ὅσσαν ἐπ' Οὐλύμπῳ μέμασαν θέμεν, αὐτὰρ ἐπ' Ὅσση  
Πήλιον εἰνοσίφυλλον Ἴν' οὐρανὸς ἄμβρατος εἴη.

A magnificent and enduring work, and if science alone could save the world, her integrity, devotion and industry would save it. But pass from her kingdom to that of morals and religion, and you are in a waste land of shaken beliefs and shattered standards, where the house-breakers are still busy. Here the work of the twentieth century has been to destroy the settled convictions of the Victorian Age, and before their attack a solid, comfortable and in most ways noble view of life has crumbled.

No doubt some destructive work was inevitable. So long as there is life in the world, each generation will react against its predecessor, correct it, go beyond it. The house that accommodates the fathers never quite suits the children. But house-breakers rarely remember that the human race lives most happily in houses which each generation modifies to suit its own needs, keeping what is serviceable in the old building, and incorporating

it in the new; certainly it cannot live on a bare site covered by untidy rubbish and relics of what has been overthrown. There is a parable in the New Testament, of a man from whom an unclean spirit was cast out, and who went through dry places seeking rest, but finding none took to himself seven other evil spirits worse than himself; and the last state of that man was worse than the first. That parable might have been written for us. The Victorian age had its standards, its ends. The critics drove out its spirits—evil and good indiscriminately—and left the house empty, swept and garnished. Nature abhors a spiritual vacuum, and strange spirits occupied the vacant rooms—Nazism, Communism, Fascism, Pacifism—each demanding an exclusive worship, while those to whom these religions do not appeal, are apt, like 'the democratic man', to admit a succession of guests, some of them disreputable.

So we stand to-day. There are items on both sides of the balance-sheet. On the debit side, there is the loss of standards, the loss of a definite philosophy of life, and the consequent loss of clear direction and steady drive. But there is a credit side too. Demolition was needed and the age of criticism has swept away some things which had to go and some which we are better without. We are less narrow, less prejudiced, more tolerant and humane than the weaker Victorians; we can apply

to ourselves, as they could not, the words which Pericles uses of Athens and say: 'We give free play to all in our public life and carry the same spirit in our daily relations with each other; we have no black looks or angry words for our neighbour if he enjoys himself in his own way.'<sup>1</sup> Perhaps we have less cant, hypocrisy and vulgarity, though these spirits usually manage, unobserved, to find new reincarnations in each age. Our vitality is undiminished; this is not a worn-out world, and its vigour is not seen only in science and industry; it has created two new 'religions'—in Russia and Germany—since the last war. Finally, we have a large fund of inherited virtues. There is an enormous amount of goodness and goodwill and right feeling and action in the modern world. Take, as a single example, a virtue so common in this country that we hardly notice it, the unselfish public spirit which shows itself in unpaid public service and in money given or bequeathed for public purposes. When a real storm comes and we know ourselves in danger, we still have the ancient virtues of England at call: witness heroism by land, sea and air; in bombed cities, courage and cheerfulness and endurance, self-help and help of others; the traditional kindness and decency of the ordinary English folk. These are great assets, not to be forgotten.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II. 37.

But in our satisfaction with our merits it is well to remember other less admirable sides of English life, of some of which I have spoken, and to reflect that we are living on character formed in the past by beliefs which are now shaken or destroyed. Character takes long to form, but it is not quickly destroyed. Lord Bryce was once asked: 'What do you think would be the effect of the disappearance of religious education from the schools?' 'I can't answer that', he replied, 'till three generations have passed.' We have inherited good habits, and habits persist almost indefinitely if there is nothing to destroy them. A plant may continue in apparent health for some time after its roots have been cut, yet its days are numbered. The case of Germany witnesses to the truth of this contention. Who, thirty years ago, would have believed a prophet who said that a decent, friendly, highly educated and civilised people, among whom Christianity was apparently still strong, would be capable of the persecution of the Jews, the horrors of the concentration camps, the barbarism, knowing neither justice nor mercy nor truth, shown in so many lands? How astonishing, we say, that such things could happen in the twentieth century! It is not in the least astonishing. The spiritual roots of Germany had been cut, and rootless virtues are precarious. But how strong are the roots of *our* virtues? The philosophy of life, the standards



by which the Victorian and earlier ages were governed, have broken down. We are left with traditions and habits of conduct inherited from them, as the earth may for a time still receive light from an extinct star. But that light will not continue to shine, nor can these habits and traditions long survive the beliefs from which they grew. Those who reject Christian beliefs, cannot count on keeping Christian morals.

Some prophetic words of Plato, which might have been written for this age, indicate our problem. 'It is not', he says, 'the life of knowledge, not even if it included all the sciences, that creates happiness and well-being, but a single branch of knowledge—the science of good and evil. If you exclude this from the other branches, medicine will be equally able to give us health, and shoemaking shoes and weaving clothes. Seaman-ship will still save life at sea and strategy win battles. But without the knowledge of good and evil, the use and excellence of these sciences will be found to have failed us.'<sup>1</sup> Plato speaks the language of his own civilisation and talks of medicine, weaving, shoemaking and seamanship. To-day he would say that science, economics and sociology, industry and commerce will provide us with the frame of our society and satisfy its material needs, but that 'unless we have the knowledge of

<sup>1</sup> *Charmides*, 174.

good and evil, their use and excellence will be found to have failed us'. It has been already 'found to have failed us'. Let us learn our lesson.

This generation then has a double task: to create the new order, of which we are always speaking; or, more accurately, to guide the nation through one of the great social changes in its history; but also to train human beings fit to live in the new order, and, in Milton's words, 'to make in the towardly and pregnant soil of England a Nation of Prophets, of Sages and of Worthies'. New orders do not necessarily mean a great civilisation, nor do improved social conditions inevitably make better human beings. Inhabitants of a slum moved into a modern housing estate may carry their old habits with them and spoil their new surroundings; and we too may be unworthy tenants of an order however new and good. We have to transform a world with uncertain standards and vague values, with many virtues but no clear philosophy of life, into one which knows how to refuse evil and choose good, clear in its aims and therefore in its judgments and action. It will not be done merely by the extension of social services or the abolition of unemployment, important as these are, but by a change of mind and heart. That will not come of itself nor can it be left to chance. We must do what, in their different ways, Russia, Germany and Italy

## CHAPTER II

### CHARACTER AND ITS TRAINING

STANDARDS; a philosophy of life; a principle by which to judge and rule it; a formula or formulas to integrate our civilisation, our new order; some knowledge of the 'science of good and evil'. How are these to be given? They are being given every moment—in cinemas, in advertisements, in newspapers and books and parliament and pulpit, through everything that we see, hear and read; and much of it is disintegration rather than integration. It is the more important that the greatest of all formative forces, education, should make its voice heard decisively above the babel of confused crying.

But are its accents clear and does it do what we need? It may do nothing, or do exactly the opposite and only add to our confusion. Listen to a description of modern education and its effects by the well-known American thinker, Mr Walter Lippmann:

There is an enormous vacuum where until a few decades ago there was the substance of education. And with what is that vacuum filled: it is filled with the elective, eclectic, the specialised, the accidental and incidental improvisations and spontaneous curiosities

of teachers and students. There is no common faith, no common body of principle, no common moral and intellectual discipline. Yet the graduates of these modern schools are expected to form a civilised community. They are expected to govern themselves. They are expected to have a social conscience. They are expected to arrive by discussion at common purposes. When one realises that they have no common culture, is it astounding that they have no common purpose? That they worship false gods? That only in war do they unite? That in the fierce struggle for existence they are tearing Western society to pieces? . . . We have established a system of education in which we insist that while everyone must be educated, yet there is nothing in particular that an educated man should know.<sup>1</sup>

Mr Lippmann argues that American education creates 'no common culture, no common faith, no common body of principle, no common moral and intellectual discipline', and that it fails to do so because it is a congeries of subjects which are excellent in themselves but have no common purpose or have forgotten what it was. British education is less elective and eclectic, but much of this criticism seems to be true of it, its results and its present tendencies.

Our education has great virtues. It is fully conscious of part of its duty and performs that

<sup>1</sup> Address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, 29 December 1940, printed in *The American Scholar* (Spring, 1941).

part as well as can be expected of any human institution. It imparts the knowledge generally considered desirable. It produces the specialists which a complicated society needs to maintain its machine. It teaches its pupils to use their intellects. Doubtless, it might do all these things better, but it makes good provision for them. We should be admirably educated if we had to be nothing but technical or professional machines, carrying out the routine of government, industry, commerce and other functions necessary to a material civilisation. Unfortunately, we have also to be human beings. We are concerned not only with livelihood but with the good life. And of this our education is only partly aware. Here and there it trains men for it, uncertainly, sporadically, fitfully; and the training depends on the insight of individual teachers and the almost accidental existence of certain schools.

This defect in education is reflected and illustrated in the state of Europe, whose industry, commerce, science, technology, medicine, are first-rate. It is a superb building, admirably equipped with the latest material improvements. Materially, it speaks a common language. Its learned men, its technologists, its soldiers and sailors, its doctors and teachers, its lawyers and administrators, use the same tongue, understand each other, are able and ready to co-operate in their various vocations.

We are advanced, united, international, in our material civilisation; when we pass beyond it, Babel begins—in our relations with others and even within ourselves. We and our education have been too absorbed in the matter of life to think of its spirit. We must restore to it a vitamin, deficient both there and in our life—a religion, a philosophy of living, a definite ideal to guide, discipline and dominate the lives of individuals and, through them, national life. Education, that maid-of-all-work, has to set her hand to as many duties as a general servant. But two things she should give everybody before her work is complete—an intellectual attitude to life and a philosophy of life. I would define the right intellectual attitude as threefold: to find the world and life intensely interesting; to wish to see them as they are; to feel that truth, in Plato's words, is both permanent and beautiful. And a philosophy of life? The right intellectual attitude to life is already a partial philosophy of it. It is complete, if you extend it to cover Goodness, Truth and Beauty, and define Goodness to cover those words which have been trumpet-calls to many generations, and, once sounded by unknown men far back in history, have been borne round the world on the waves of the spiritual air, now loud, now low, but never wholly silent: love, justice, courage, self-mastery, mercy, liberty. Philosophy passes into religion

when these are seen to point to and derive their validity from that ultimate spiritual reality which we call God. Philosophy and an intellectual attitude, are high-sounding terms; yet their rudiments are within the powers of any school-child—to find work interesting, to see the difference between fact and fiction, and to acquire an outlook, a habit of mind, a sense of values, an insight into ‘the science of good and evil’, which will later ripen into a rational conviction. The fundamental task of education is to put into the mind some idea of what these things are, some desire to pursue them. An education that does this is a success: an education that does less is a failure. Our education seems to me to do it only partially and sporadically.

Consider the School Certificate—and the majority of children in secondary schools get no further—and ask what principle lies behind it, and you will probably conclude that if any principle integrates it, if any tie holds together its collection of loose sticks, it is an attempt to train some of the faculties and impart some of the knowledge which ‘an educated person should possess’. Excellent so far; but this is not enough to produce ‘a common faith, common culture, common body of principle’. From time to time reformers get busy. But they are more concerned with what the pupil must know and how his faculties should be trained, than with his sense of values and his knowledge of good

political horizon, fills the newspapers and the public eye, becomes interesting and important for the moment. There is a general feeling that we do not know enough of Ruritania, and that something ought to be done about it. A public-spirited person, or an expert on Ruritania, writes to *The Times*. Teachers of Ruritanian point out how neglected the subject is in our schools and how few chairs of the Ruritanian language there are in the Universities, and urge that it should be included in the Higher Certificate syllabus and in language courses for a degree. The Board of Education is approached and blesses the project in guarded words. We all know this phenomenon: it occurs at least once a year. Generally—such is the force of human inertia and so many are the competing subjects—nothing is done. Ruritania passes out of the news and the agitation subsides into a few faint flickers at educational conferences. And that perhaps is fortunate. Otherwise another addition is made to an overcrowded curriculum, its chaos grows still more chaotic, still more devoid of system or plan; the shop-window is elaborately dressed but bears little relation to the goods in the shop; the face value of the currency is imposing, its purchasing power small. Such methods take us somewhere, but not where we need to go.

Our utilitarianism reveals itself in the discussion of the modern languages to be taught in schools—



shall French, German, Russian, Spanish, Italian have the first place? Various arguments are brought forward, difficulty, intellectual discipline, commercial value, help to international understanding, available texts and other relevant points. But one most important consideration is hardly ever mentioned—the quality of the literature in the languages concerned. And yet a major criterion in the choice of a language is the wisdom and greatness to which its knowledge opens the door and obviously languages differ greatly in this respect; the little attention that we pay to it betrays our habit of mind. Here perhaps I may be allowed a personal memory. I was taught French and German at school: in French we read books of the quality of *Tartarin de Tarascon*, *Le Capitaine Pamphile*, *Le Roi des Montagnes* and *Monte Cristo*; in German after two terms on *Easy Passages for German Translation* we were thrown headlong into *Faust*, followed by Heine, Schiller and Lessing. Pedagogically, our German teacher's method was indefensible, educationally (in the highest sense of the word) it was right, that in a literature which has so little above the second rank we should have met its best writers and its one great genius. We learn German, but also something more. Education would be the better if it had more of that spirit and looked more steadily beyond material and immediate needs. Science, technology, economics

modern languages for commerce, are of course essential to the modern world. But their concern is with the means of life, not with its ends; and a clear view of ends is as essential to successful living as a mastery of means. We live—all of us—in two worlds; in the everyday world which changes in each age with the progress of material civilisation; and (whether we give it that name or not) in a spiritual world, without which Science could not believe in Truth, or Religion in God, or Good itself have any meaning. This is the world of values. To sacrifice it to science or economics or sociology or anything else is as fatal as to omit vitamins from the human diet. We do not pay enough attention to it.

I have suggested that our secondary education, while as efficient in its actual teaching as any human institution is likely to be, suffers in general from lack of integration, from the absence of a spirit to order and guide its processes, and that in the choice and teaching of subjects it thinks more of what its pupils should know than of their outlook on life. What of proposals for its integration? There are many, and we should soon be well if abundance of prescriptions were enough. Among them are education for freedom, for creativeness, for personality, for equality, for social change, for a dynamic society, for a world of science and technology. Dynamic, creative, personality, equality,

liberty, democracy, science, social change—these comforting words are often flung about, without any exact idea of what they mean or how far they take us. We ought indeed to be free, dynamic and creative, to develop our personalities; we live in a world of social change and science and should know how to do it. But do any of these proposals take us far? Will they solve, do they show any awareness of, our deepest problem? Are they more than skating on a surface below which are unplumbed and unregarded depths? Education for freedom: the value of freedom depends on how it is used. For creativeness. To create what? For personality. To develop what kind of person? For equality or an equalitarian life. Lived at what spiritual level? For the 'highly technicalised twentieth-century civilisation'. To understand techniques will not teach us to use them for good purposes. For social change. What is the soul of the new world to be? For a dynamic society. Dynamic for what ends? The Gadarene swine were very dynamic; so is Germany. We must go deeper than any of these prescriptions will take us. Excellent as they are within their limits, they will not reach our real disease. The prescribers have never asked what should be the guiding principle of the State, whose citizens they have to train; and, deeper still, what the individual is to be or to seek to be; they have never defined the good life for

man. It is not enough to give people the knowledge necessary to live in a 'highly technicalised civilisation' or even the power of thinking clearly, unless they are given a clear conception of the kind of pattern they should weave, of the life which they and their fellow-citizens should lead. Without this they may be equipped with the means to realise their end, but they will be in the dark or in twilight about the end itself. Knowledge of science and technology and economics is not the end; nor are creativeness or freedom or even truth; they are indispensable to civilisation but too narrow a basis for it, and schemes that look no further leave us where we are—able to make and do almost all we want, but uncertain what we wish to make or do or be, ignorant of the fundamental 'science of good and evil'.

Anyone who looks at the present state of the world must feel that this is the problem of which we need to think most. But we shy away from it, partly through short-sightedness, partly through moral and intellectual cowardice. It is at any time the most difficult and dangerous of all problems, and doubly so to-day when the beliefs of Western civilisation are shaken. We know what to believe about science and modern languages and economics, or at any rate think that we can find out, or at worst that it does not so much matter if we make mistakes about them. So we succumb to the

common and disastrous human instinct to run away from difficult decisions, and concentrate on freedom or creativeness or equality or technology, as if these, however important, were substitutes for something more fundamental. But the decision must be made: our own character and the character of our society depend on it: if we decide wrongly they will be bad, if we decide right they will be good; if we hesitate and haver, they will be impotent and at the mercy of any strong force.

But, it will be said, some of our education at least is 'integrated', and integrated round the very principle for which you are arguing, round standards and a definite view of life. Are we not always talking about character? Have we not always believed that it is more important than brains? Has not its development been the chief aim of English education, since Arnold defined his ideal as the training of Christian gentlemen? 'Christian', 'gentlemen'—what do these words connote except character and a philosophy of life built on this? And have we not been, in large measure, successful? Onlookers have a clearer view of the game than the players; and the feature which foreigners admire in English residential schools, and find wanting in their own, is the power of training character. Is not this the principle of integration which we want, and could there be a better?

I hesitate to introduce into my argument an institution which excites lively passions; there is more objectivity in a bull looking at scarlet than in some critics contemplating residential schools. Yet it is the fact that the three most original British achievements in education are (in chronological order) the Residential School, the Workers' Educational Association and the Scout and Guide Movement. Other countries may equal or surpass our elementary, secondary, technical and university education; but these three products are creations of our own and are all known, admired and imitated abroad. Among these the residential school aims at producing, and on the whole does successfully produce, a definite type of human being with clear standards, and achieves more nearly what I have been pleading for than any other of our educational institutions. There are other schools which send their pupils out into the world with a definite attitude to life, but it is especially characteristic of the residential school to do it. Whether it likes it or not, it cannot help producing a common attitude to life among its pupils, not in virtue of its curriculum, which does not differ from that of the day school, but because it is residential. It has its pupils' whole time and their whole life, their hours of leisure as well as of work, for eight months of the year. In such circumstances a common ethos (which may leave

room for great individual differences)<sup>1</sup> must develop automatically. The residential school cannot in its own interests neglect the character-training of its inmates or leave it wholly to the home. Nor can it neglect religion, at least in a country which sets store by religion. Hence the school chapel and religious worship and teaching and the development of a view of life. And, at its best, the residential school has been and is admirably successful in producing men with right values and a clear view of life.

But it has not always been at its best, and then it has both succeeded and failed; succeeded in training certain moral qualities, and failed because our definition of character has been too narrow. Character means for us courage, truthfulness, trustworthiness, a sense of honour, independence, fair play, public spirit and leadership. These are national ideals and on the whole national virtues, and in developing them the English race and the English school compare favourably with any other. They are the qualities necessary if men wish to live together in a society, and the English insistence on them partly explains why we have so far been able to work passably well the most difficult form of society, democracy, in which there

<sup>1</sup> Those who speak of the residential school as 'crushing individuality' may reflect that Sir Stafford Cripps, Mr D. N. Pritt and Sir Oswald Mosley were all educated at Winchester.

is a minimum of compulsion and a maximum of free co-operation. But these by themselves do not complete character. If a man has them, he should be able to 'withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand'. But life is wider and richer than the traditional virtues of the residential school. It includes art and thought and science, and all the capacities which create these and all the activities which they cover. Further, life is dynamic as well as static; it involves motion as well as standing and withstanding; and motion, if it is to be of any purpose, is towards a goal, rightly chosen and clearly seen. It is not enough to be able to do right, unless we know the right; and this knowledge is part of character. Here we are less successful. Indeed the history of mankind might be described by a cynic as a series of splendid expeditions towards the wrong goal or towards no goal at all, led by men who have all the gifts of leadership except a sense of direction, and every endowment for achieving their ends except the knowledge of ends worth achieving. We must not forget in our education this element, a sense of direction. We do forget it, if we are content that our schools should merely impart knowledge, develop and discipline the intelligence, train character in the narrow sense. They must also be places where the mind is enriched by the right visions and where the ends of life are learned.



The English find it difficult to take these aspects of school seriously. There is a common assumption among them that a boy good at games will be good in practical life, and that a boy good at books will not. Neither of these beliefs is borne out by facts or shared by any other nations except those of English blood. But Englishmen nurture in the depth of their hearts a feeling that intellectual interests are enervating. They do not really believe that the claim of Pericles for Athens—‘Our intellectual interests involve no effeminacy’—could be true about anybody. They are better pleased with the ideal of the Spartans ‘who from their cradle cultivate manliness by laborious discipline’.<sup>1</sup> The long roll of English statesmen and men of action from Raleigh and Chatham to Gladstone and Cromer, who have found inspiration, delight and consolation in literature, is nothing to them. They would have thought Wolfe incapable of taking Quebec if they had known his enthusiasm for Gray’s *Elegy*, and been nervous about Charles James Fox’s passion for Euripides, if his gambling debts had not suggested that he was a man of affairs. They would regard Napoleon’s and Wellington’s fondness for the *De Bello Gallico* as a dangerous symptom; as doubtless they would have disbelieved in Caesar’s practical capacity, because he wrote a book on the theory of grammar

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II. 39.

during his Gallic campaigns, and quoted Menander when he crossed the Rubicon.

Hence the theory which is often heard at prize-days. Some distinguished general or admiral, some successful business man, returns for a few hours to the haunts of his youth and expounds his sentiments on the principles of education. They may be read in *The Times* any June or July, when English schools normally hold their prize-days. The speaker points out that it is not always the successful schoolboy who succeeds in after life. He himself was no good at work and never much cared for it; but then, he reminds his audience, it is not learning Latin and Greek that one looks for at school, but training of character and learning to play the game. How well one knows this doctrine! In any case it is superfluous. To preach it to school-boys is carrying coals to Newcastle. Few of them need to be warned against over-valuing Latin and Greek, against a too arduous devotion to intellectual interests. But there is a graver objection to it. The doctrine is false. A character, trained in this limited sense, is admirable within its limits but inadequate to the needs of the modern world. It is deficient *as a character*. It may have, and at its best undoubtedly has, powers of leadership. But it is the leadership of a corporal or a sergeant. Such an education produces a superb army of N.C.O.'s; whereas the real business of the school is to train

staff-officers, men able to face unexpected emergencies, to lead an army and not merely a platoon, to plan a campaign.

It would of course be grossly unfair to suppose that the residential school has always produced such limited types or produced nothing else. It was very different in Arnold's hands: he broadened the basis of education; whatever he taught—classics, history or scripture—he taught in its relation to life; he trained character, but he gave a philosophy of life to support it. And in this he has had many successors. Anyone who doubts this and supposes that residential schools turn out nothing but a regimented type without intellectual or other interests can refute his error by glancing through the pages of *Who's Who* or examining the names in any Cabinet and asking whether its members who were educated at residential schools compare unfavourably with those who were not. Still this has been the besetting danger of the residential school and the sharpest weapon of their critics. At their weakest they have sent out boys furnished with invaluable qualities of character but with character trained on too narrow lines; they have thought it enough to give them 'a habit of good behaviour without an intellectual basis'—the phrase is Plato's, who points out how inadequate an equipment this is for life in a disordered world. In this they have reflected the weaknesses

of the nation itself, its Philistinism, its reluctance to think things out or to base conduct on principle.

What then shall we do?

Education is a vast continent and it will make for clearer thinking if we divide it into three main provinces, corresponding to the three main needs of human life. All men need to make a living—not a bare one, but the best that conditions allow. All men live in a society. All men have a personality to develop and the power of living ill or well. For all these education must provide, and it must therefore include a vocational element, a social or, as the Greeks would have called it, a political element, and a spiritual element. Men must learn to earn a living, to be good members of a society, to understand the meaning of the phrase 'the good life'; and education must help them to achieve these three ends. It must do this not for a limited class but for every citizen, though it will do it in different ways for different people.

The new society, then, like every society, will need three main kinds of education—vocational, social, spiritual. It must provide for its material existence and for the running of its machine, and the education dealing with this may be called vocational. It will need its technologists and skilled workers to feed it, clothe it and supply the necessities, comforts and even luxuries of life; its

doctors, scientists, economists, teachers, administrators. So it will have every variety of technical education, and in its places of higher study it must provide not only for Medicine, Science and Applied Science, but for such subjects as Economics, Psychology, Sociology, Public and Colonial and Business Administration: the list can be completed by studying the Calendar of the London School of Economics. That, of course, is not to say that everyone will study all, or even any, of those subjects. In addition to training the numerous and various specialists which it requires, a society should give its educated members at least, not indeed specialist knowledge, but some perception of the general conditions and possibilities of modern civilisation, and a sense of the importance and uses of the techniques and specialisms essential to it.

Then our society will need social or political education, a training in citizenship, as we call it, which I leave to a later chapter, passing on to the third aspect of education—that which fits a man for living well. In practice it cannot be separated from the other two—education for a vocation and for citizenship—but in aim it differs from them. It has no name. You can call it the education of personality, but that word in turn needs definition, and it is simplest to take the old Greek analysis and think of it as the education of body, mind and character, to the highest degree of which each

individual is capable. Of this immense subject I shall only touch on a side which, for want of a better word, may be called spiritual. The efficiency of a community will depend on its technical and vocational education, its cohesion and duration largely on its social or political education. But the quality of its civilisation depends on something else. It depends on its standards, its sense of values, its idea of what is first-rate and what is not. The vocational and the social aspects of education are essential, but the most fatal to omit is the spiritual aspect; fatal, because its absence may be long unperceived, and, as with an insidious disease, a State may suffer from it and be unconscious of its condition till the complaint has gone too far to cure. And this spiritual element is precisely what we tend to ignore. Yet nothing is more needed at the moment. The body of our civilisation risks destruction by war, and we are too distressed by that to notice that its soul is already more than half drowned in the turbid river of modern life.

During the last war the salvation of the world was assigned to science. Now we are disillusioned. Science, like medicine, is an integral part of civilised life. It is difficult for human beings to maintain health without doctors, but medicine is not health. It is difficult for a civilisation to be sound without science, but science is not civilisation, and few people can suppose that salvation is

its business. To-day we tend to assign that rôle to psychology, economics and sociology. These branches of knowledge are indispensable to our civilisation. We have not enough of them. We need more. But though adjuncts and auxiliaries, they too are not saviours of society, and if we fix our hopes on them the year 1960 will find us so much further down the hill and looking for some other force to help us to recover our lost ground. Our knowledge of the sciences, natural or social, fixes the limits of the course within which the yachts on which humanity is embarked must sail, but does not indicate the goal of their voyage, still less supply wind to fill their sails.

The forces that move the world need to be informed and disciplined by the intellect, but they are not in themselves intellectual. Is there any great event in history which does not bear out that truth? Economic or social conditions may prepare the way; the moving force is a vision. The ardour that created modern Germany and modern Russia came from a vision,<sup>1</sup> even if it was one seen through bloodshot eyes. An eternal trait of men is the need for vision and the readiness to follow it; and if men are not given the right vision, they will follow wandering fires. One tragedy of our world is that Hitler had a vision and his opponents had not. The weakness of England and of America is that (with

<sup>1</sup> I do not mean to put the two visions on a level.

plenty of science and a quantum at least of economics and sociology) they have seen no clear vision. Indistinct and blurred figures stir them in their uneasy sleep, but have not yet taken form. That has been a grave weakness in this war; it will be a much graver one, when we face the problems of peace.

If we are to cure it, we must look beyond (without overlooking) science, technology, economics, sociology, handicrafts, subjects 'with a vocational bias', and recall and extend a statement by Professor Whitehead that would probably surprise most English people: 'Moral education', he says, 'is impossible without—' What? Residential schools, games, a happy and disciplined family life? No, none of these. 'Moral education is impossible without the habitual vision of greatness.'<sup>1</sup> It could not be put more strongly—'*impossible*', '*habitual vision*' (not a chance and occasional glimpse). Outside Plato, there is no profounder saying about education.

A 'habitual vision of greatness' is necessary not only to moral education, but to all education. A teacher cannot give an adequate training in anything unless he knows, and can make his pupil see, what is great and first-rate in it. How can you train a surgeon unless you show him the finest technique of surgery; or a teacher, unless he knows

<sup>1</sup> *The Aims of Education*, p. 106.



the best methods of educational practice; or an architect, unless he is familiar with the great examples of his art? So, too, with all subjects from building to farming, from carpentry to Greek prose. Much else may enter the student's training; but there is no stimulus like seeing the best work in the subject which he studies; he will have no standards, no conception of the goal to which he painfully struggles, unless he sees the best; he will slip insensibly to lower levels of ideal and practice, unless it is continually before his mind, unless, in fact, he has the 'habitual vision of greatness' to attract, direct and inspire. In all studies and in all spheres of life, knowledge of the best is essential to success. And if this is necessary in medicine and teaching and architecture and town-planning, must it not be necessary in character? And is not Whitehead right when he says that you cannot train character 'without the habitual vision of greatness'? Mere character training in the narrow sense could be carried out by a drill-sergeant; courage, endurance, fair-play, discipline, could be learnt on a parade ground, and the work would need a far less highly qualified staff than those of a school. There is something more to character training than this. It is common and disastrous to forget that the character must be trained through the intellect as well as by other means, and that part of the work of education is to enrich the vision

of its pupils and thereby train their characters. A school that fails to do this is failing to do its work. That is a truth of which teachers and pupils cannot too often remind themselves. What more important service can school or university do for their pupils than show them the best things that have been done, thought and written in the world, and fix these in their minds as a standard and test to guide them in life? Men's achievements depend not only on the qualities of character (in the narrow sense) with which they tackle their task but also on knowing what is first-rate; ill-success in every field of life is due quite as much to ignorance of what is good as to incapacity to achieve it. One is apt to think of moral failure as due to weakness of character: more often it is due to an inadequate ideal. We detect in others, and occasionally in ourselves, the want of courage, of industry, of persistence which leads to defeat. But we do not notice the more subtle and disastrous weakness, that our standards are wrong, that we have never learnt what is good.

Take an example. The nineteenth century built cities of incredible ugliness, the twentieth century spoils the beauty of the country with hideous bungalows and defaces the beauty of Oxford by making it an industrial town—in perfect innocence but with disastrous results. It was not malice aforethought, it was pure ignorance. It was the

absence of a standard. It was the failure to know what was really good. How essential then that the citizen should know and desire the best things—the best things in art and architecture, the best things in literature and thought, the best things in politics, industry and commerce, the best professional ideals, the best things in human character! In the perfectly educated community at least the leaders, and so far as possible their public, would have seen this vision not only in their own immediate work, but in many fields. They would know the best in imperial, national and municipal politics; in town-planning, housing, and the social services; in the earning and spending of money; in social and family relations; in thought and art, intellect and individual life. The more fields and the clearer the vision, the richer and greater national life would be. School and university cannot do more than begin such a work; their pupils are too undeveloped, their time too short, to take in such a panorama. It must be begun at school, but it needs to be carried on and completed in later life and demands a provision for adult education which our shortsightedness has not yet dreamed of making. How inadequate is an education which fails to impart something of such visions! How misconceived is one which never makes the attempt! That is the disastrous flaw in the doctrine of those who suppose that a school has done its

duty when it has taught pluck, self-reliance, truthfulness and the art of playing the game. These are indeed splendid qualities. But they are not enough to make a world. Achieve them and we shall still have achieved only a part of human virtue. The most indispensable viaticum for the journey of life is a store of adequate ideals, and these are acquired in a very simple way, by living with the best things in the world—the best pictures, the best buildings, the best social or political orders, the best human beings. The way to acquire a good taste in anything, from pictures to architecture, from literature to character, from wine to cigars, is always the same—be familiar with the best specimens of each.

Knowledge of the *first-rate* gives direction, purpose and drive: direction, because it shows what is good as well as what is bad; purpose, because it reveals an ideal to pursue; drive, because an ideal stirs to action. To have seen Oxford or Cambridge, Edinburgh or Bath makes a nineteenth-century industrial city and a drab or 'picturesque' suburb repulsive, or at least pricks the conscience and stirs a sense of something wrong. The sight of goodness in life or in literature or history gives a standard and a challenge. If anyone has been able to compare the *first-rate* with the *second-rate*, his criticism will not be merely bitter and barren, but creative, born of a vision perceiving the good, dominated by it and desiring

to bring it to birth. 'The intelligence of every soul rejoices at beholding Reality, and once more gazing on Truth is replenished and made glad.'<sup>1</sup>

In the fable from which these words are quoted, Plato, describing how each human soul before birth drove across heaven in the company of the gods, and saw Beauty, Justice, Courage and the other virtues, says that success in life depends on how far, among the shadows, confusions and distractions of earth, the soul retains the memory of that vision. Plato's story is a parable of a good education.

*Note.* Dr F. H. Hayward's Books of 'School Celebrations' contain ingenious and attractive methods of introducing the pupil to great figures, moments and movements in history.

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Phaedrus*, 247.

### CHAPTER III

## THE TRAINING OF CHARACTER THROUGH HISTORY AND LITERATURE

OUR education then should not be satisfied with imparting the information which a pupil requires, equipping him for a vocation, teaching him how to use his mind. It should send him out with a definite spiritual attitude to life, and the material and basis for a definite philosophy of living. It should have the aim which it would probably profess to-day, which it would certainly not disclaim, but which in general it pursues half-heartedly and ineffectually, and in the university stage, especially in the newer universities, wholly abandons—the aim which education had 2300 years ago. Here is a description of the training of a Greek boy in the fifth century B.C.; consider, as you read it, if it would apply to our English education.

Education begins in the first years of childhood. As soon as the child can understand what is said, nurse and mother and the father himself exert themselves to make the child as good as possible, at each word and action teaching and showing that this is right and that wrong, this honourable and that dishonourable, this

allowed by God and that not allowed. At a later stage they send him to teachers and tell them to attend to his conduct far more than to his reading and writing. And the teachers do so, and when the boy has learned his letters, they put into his hands the works of great poets, and make him read and learn them by heart, sitting on his bench at school. These are full of instruction and of tales and praises of famous men of old, and the aim is that the boy may admire and imitate and be eager to become like them. The music teachers, in the same way, take care that their young pupil learns self-control, and does nothing wrong, and when they have taught him to play, they teach him the poems of good lyric poets, and set these to music and make their harmonies and rhythms familiar to the children's souls, in order that they may become gentler and more rhythmical and harmonious and so fitted for speech and action. For the life of man in every part needs rhythm and harmony. Then they send the boy to the teacher of gymnastic, in order that the perfect body may serve the virtuous mind, and that he may not be compelled by physical defects to play the coward in war or in the other activities of life.<sup>1</sup>

Note here the aim—the overwhelming insistence on producing a definite type of character, a definite attitude to life. Education is conceived as spiritual training, and all its subjects, whatever else they are, are also food of the soul. That should be our model. Note too the methods; this steeping of the pupil in what is first-rate in ‘stories and

<sup>1</sup> *Protagoras*, 325 f.

praises of famous men', in order that he 'may imitate them and wish to become like them'; this discipline of the body, not for the body's sake but that the body may be 'the servant of the virtuous mind'. That is the education which all human beings in all ages need.

It may seem a great narrowing of education; nothing about information or mental discipline; no word of science or economics; a restriction of it to training in goodness, to loving what is right and hating what is wrong. It is no doubt an excessive simplification, an over-concentration on one element; but for this age the emphasis is in the right place, nor does it in any way exclude other elements; it only stresses the supreme importance of character-training. Such an ideal would not cause any upheaval in our education, or any serious recasting of the curriculum; it would only involve a change of attitude and emphasis in the teaching of certain subjects. Visions of greatness in human life and character are to our hand in two subjects taught in every school—literature and history, including the Bible, which is both literature and history.

Here then we shall find visions of the first-rate in human life and character. But to see them clearly, we must read literature and history in a particular way. There are many ways of reading both. Take history. Most of us treat it as a panorama, often



broken and dim, in which are seen the adventures of man on the earth from earliest beginnings to the last syllable of recorded time. We read it vaguely, the mind caught by a dramatic scene, a striking character or event, an interesting fact: the kaleidoscope revolves, the combinations change; and, unless the memory is retentive, pattern and colours fade from the mind. Or, again, we read with purpose, focussing the mind on some special aspect; we concentrate perhaps on the discovery of particular facts, or the study of great movements, on the growth of civilisation or the rise and fall of peoples, on constitutional development or political thought, on nationalism or colonial expansion or social change. All these ways of studying are legitimate and necessary; but will not help us, except accidentally, in our present purpose. If we wish to find spiritual values and patterns of goodness in literature or history, we must look for them as deliberately as, if we were primarily interested in economics, we should note in our reading allusions to industry or trade or wages or anything that threw light on the working of economic forces. The study of history in schools changes. In my youth it is supposed to have stressed kings, generals and nobles, diplomacy and war; then it became fashionable to concentrate on social aspects and the life of the common people. It includes this and much more. But ultimately it is the story of

the slow ascent of man from the animal to the savage, and from the savage to modern civilisation. In this story lie the deepest interest and most fruitful lessons, and here we can find what we are looking for. Many things have conditioned and contributed to the ascent of humanity; biology, climate, economics have played a part; but so have great men. Here we are on the track of the examples, the inspiration that we were seeking—on the track of the first-rate. It is on this side of history that we must concentrate if we are looking for standards and values and the first-rate in human nature and conduct. The record of peoples and civilisations and the growth and decline of institutions and nations offer no doubt visions of greatness; Greece was more than Pericles, Rome than Caesar, Britain than Cromwell or Chatham or Pitt. But it is in the personalities of history that we see most clearly courage and persistence, desire for wisdom and devotion to good—the great positive forces of the world by which humanity has climbed from cave and forest into a clearer air. Montaigne has written the motto for such a study of history: ‘I would have the teacher remember the goal of his labours and be more concerned to impress on his pupil the characters of Hannibal and of Scipio than the date of the fall of Carthage.’<sup>1</sup>

Here certain distinctions are necessary. The

<sup>1</sup> Montaigne, *Essays*, I. 25.

makers of civilisation fall into three main classes—men of action, men of thought and knowledge, men of vision—a class which includes religious thinkers and teachers, poets and artists. These three classes make the rope by which men, with many halts and slips, climb slowly into a clearer air; all contribute to its strength: and seen from outside the three strands are combined so closely that it is hard to tell what each contributes or where they interlace. Some people suffer from colour-blindness, and can see only one strand. Thus early Christian fathers, like Tertullian, could not see the strand of thought and knowledge: thus in modern times Mr Wells sees little else, and in it sees chiefly the threads of science. But it is important to realise that the rope is of triple ply, and, so far as possible, to disentangle its components; we shall not understand civilisation if we forget any of the strands; we shall misunderstand it, if we do not clearly distinguish their contribution. It is difficult to exaggerate the influence of Faraday, Darwin and Pasteur, or, in a narrower field and for a shorter time, of men like Adam Smith; but their influence is wholly different from the influence of Socrates and Plato and the Stoics, of Christ, of St Augustine and St Thomas, or again from that of Alexander, Augustus, Charlemagne, Cromwell, Napoleon. No truism could be more obvious, but how often it has been forgotten! Each of the strands in turn

is apt to seem, to those interested in it, to be the whole rope. In every age the strongest force fills the common eye and distorts the common judgment. In the past, religion was the offender, and the Church disregarded science or took the function of science into its own hands, and at various times decided that the earth was flat, that the Antipodes did not exist, that Hell was in the centre of the earth, and that the Creation took place some 6000 years ago. When religion restricted itself to its own function, the turn of science came, and popular imagination and some scientists made for the characteristic force of the age claims equally extravagant, unjustified and fallacious, and assigned it a dictatorship over life. As previously religion, so now science, like Bottom in Shakespeare, is to absorb every part in the drama: 'An I may hide my face, let me play Thisby too.' To-day, we are disillusioned but hardly wiser; for the pre-eminence allotted to science is being transferred to politics. Germany and Italy have looked for salvation to dictators, and we tend to think that the world will be saved by sociology and economics, by a managed currency or the organisation of international trade, by 'new orders' and 'planning'. Thus:

Opinion gilds, with varying rays,  
 These painted clouds that beautify our days:  
 Hope builds as fast as knowledge can destroy.

But the rope will not bear the weight of humanity if it has only one strand or even two. Science and politics are essential but they are not enough without the spiritual strand, which, using the word in the widest sense, we may call religion.

Therefore, in reading history as the record of human progress, education must see all three strands in the rope—spiritual, intellectual, political—study the men in whom they are embodied, and do justice to all. In fifth-century Athens it must remember Socrates and Democritus as well as Pericles; in the twelfth century A.D., St Bernard and John of Salisbury as well as Henry I and Frederick Barbarossa; in the sixteenth, Sir Thomas More and Copernicus as well as Henry VIII and Luther; in the nineteenth, Darwin and Shaftesbury as well as Bismarck and Cavour. We must judge these men in the light not only of their own age, but of all time, and estimate their contribution to civilisation *sub specie aeternitatis*, trying to read the writing of the Recording Angel and to divine the sentence of the Last Judgment. Here Time helps, and looking back we can discern the qualities that have brought mankind on, and those which have kept them back; the men and the nations who have deserted the army and dropped out of the struggle, and those who have been victorious or by their faith and endurance have made victory possible

for others. Contemporary judgments are often reversed:

O'er that wide plain, now wrapt in gloom,  
Where many a splendour finds its tomb,  
Many spent fames and fallen might—  
The one or two immortal lights  
Rise slowly up into the sky  
To shine there everlastingly.

In the ascent of humanity, slow, devious and broken, Socrates is seen to matter more to the world than Pericles, St Bernard than Frederick, Sir Thomas More than Henry VIII, Pasteur and Darwin and, perhaps, Shaftesbury than Bismarck. Indeed in our survey we run the risk of undervaluing the men of action. They are an essential strand in the rope; and possibly a statesman who combines greatness with goodness, even if he contributes less to civilisation, deserves no less credit for his work than a great religious teacher or social reformer, or man of science; for his task, if it is rightly done, is even more difficult than theirs.

Having distinguished the three strands, political, scientific, spiritual, we can turn to look more closely at the great men, and learn what is first-rate in human nature by studying those who have embodied it. And here turning to what may be called the life of the spirit, we must again dis-

tinguish different types. There are men who have done in the spiritual world what Darwin and Pasteur did in the world of nature—revealed a new attitude and outlook, and so enabled mankind to live on levels which without their vision it could not have reached. These are the prophets and religious teachers, who with a few words make revolutions in the spiritual life of mankind; like the utterance of Hosea: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt-offerings’, or the words of Christ: ‘Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, do good to them that hate you: that ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven.’ Such utterances change the world; higher levels of existence are revealed; a new life is conceived, even if it takes millennia to bring it to birth.

Then there are men to whom we owe a different revelation—that of goodness in action. Such, in one aspect of his life, was Socrates; such was St Bernard of Clairvaux, than whom few men are better worth study in difficult times, for he lived in an iron age.<sup>1</sup> In the world there was lawlessness and savagery, in the Church a corruption, to which our time, so critical of the ‘failure of the Church’, offers no parallel. It would have been natural if he

<sup>1</sup> There is a good Life by Cotter Morison.

had swum with the tide, or taken refuge from it in a hermitage or lapsed into pessimism and denunciation. Instead, patiently and resolutely, he threw himself into the desperate battle, turned the rout and made a better world possible. If there had not been many such men, saints canonised and uncanonised, famous and unknown, mankind would not have advanced:

Their shoulders held the heavens suspended;  
They stood, and earth's foundations stay.

We can perhaps learn more from them than from the prophets, for their virtues are nearer to our capacities, if not to our needs.

Now turn from history to literature, the other great treasury of the first-rate in human nature and life. Here again, it is a question of angle of approach. In a work of prose or poetry we may be interested in date, sources, the biography of the writer, the contemporary or historical interest of his work; or in its technical aspects, in construction, metre, language; or we may read it for pure pleasure, indifferent to any other consideration; or we may study it deliberately as a vision of the world and of life. It is of this angle of approach that I wish to speak, and I would define it more exactly by saying that literature is a study, combined with delight, in the art of living, a vision of what is first-rate in human nature and life.



Literature, as a revelation of the first-rate in human nature and life, may take the form of direct exposition. Thus Matthew Arnold's *Morality* is a contrast between the spontaneous, effortless forces of Nature, and Morality, struggling and laborious, yet with a divine quality which Nature does not possess: thus Wordsworth's *Ode to Duty* is a balancing, almost a discussion, of two forms of goodness, the free, natural goodness,

When love is an unerring light  
And joy its own security,

and one controlled and fortified by the law of duty; thus *The Character of the Happy Warrior* is a plain enumeration of the qualities which seemed to Wordsworth the best armour for the battle of life. These poems—and much of *The Prelude*—read almost like passages from Plato or Spinoza or Kant, or some philosophical or religious writer. In them poetry becomes deliberate criticism of life, unsystematic moral philosophy, written by men of imaginative genius (who are sometimes as good introductions to the subject as the philosophers). Such poems, like philosophy, are usually better appreciated and more enjoyed after the age of twenty than before it.

Then there are poems where the ideas are no longer abstract but clothed in a concrete form. In this class come works like Wordsworth's *Leech-*

*Gatherer*, a story of a walk on a moor during which the poet met an old man gathering leeches in the ponds. None of his poems better illustrate the poet's power which he so modestly describes:

In common things that round us lie  
Some random truths he can impart;  
The harvest of a quiet eye  
That broods and sleeps on his own heart;

in none has imaginative insight found more perfect poetic expression. It can be read almost without reference to the idea which it embodies and which the sub-title, '*Resolution and Independence*', records; but that idea dominated the poet's mind, even if a reader may not notice it.

Then again there are poems, like *The Faery Queen*, *Paradise Lost*, *Prometheus Unbound*, *The Idylls of the King*, in which a view of life is present, but latent. In all of them it is easy to forget or disregard the philosophy they embody, and, when the moral or idea in them loses its interest, the story may survive by its own vitality: as *Paradise Lost* has outlived its theology without losing any of its greatness, and remains a masterpiece though it no longer justifies the ways of God to man.

In all these types of poetry a view of life is present, submerged in each at different depths. In *The Happy Warrior* it stands out and strikes the mind at once; in *The Leech-Gatherer* it may escape notice; in *The Faery Queen* or *The Idylls of the King*

it must be looked for, if it is to be seen. Spenser, for instance, can be read for many reasons and looked at from many angles. We may be interested in his poetic development, in his vocabulary and versification, or in the vicissitudes of his stormy life; or we can lose ourselves in a world of romance, where, as on tapestry, knights and ladies, magicians and fairies move against a background of seas and palaces and

Forests and enchantment drear  
Where more is meant than meets the ear.

But it is equally legitimate, and for our present purpose important, to be aware of another side of *The Faery Queen*. This is what a nineteenth-century critic, who looked for the view of life in *The Faery Queen*, found there:

The unity is one of character and its ideal. That character of the completed man, raised above what is poor and low, and governed by noble temper and pure principles, has in Spenser two conspicuous elements. In the first place, it is based on manliness. It is not merely courage, it is not merely energy, it is not merely strength. It is the quality of soul which frankly accepts the conditions in human life, of labour, of obedience, of effort, of unequal success; which does not quarrel with them or evade them, but takes for granted with unquestioning alacrity that man is called—by his call to high aims and destiny—to a continual struggle with difficulty, with pain, with evil, and makes it the point of honour not to be dismayed or wearied out by them.

It is a cheerful and serious willingness for hard work and endurance, as being inevitable and very bearable necessities, together with even a pleasure in encountering trials which put a man on his mettle, an enjoyment of the contest and the risk, even in play. It is the quality which seizes on the paramount idea of duty, as something which leaves a man no choice; which despises and breaks through the inferior considerations and motives—trouble, uncertainty, doubt, curiosity—which hang about and impede duty; which is impatient with the idleness and childishness of a life of mere amusement, or mere looking on, of continued and self-satisfied levity, of vacillation, of clever and ingenious trifling.<sup>1</sup>

All this is undoubtedly present in *The Faery Queen* and it is possible both to enjoy the poem as poetry, and see and saturate oneself in the ideal which Dean Church found in it. And it is worth finding.

So far I have been speaking of poets, who had some moral in their minds and intended to convey a lesson. But the moralists are not necessarily the best moral teachers: the first-rate exists and is felt, even though no one calls attention to it. It is, as the Greek critic said of sublimity, an echo of greatness of mind, and when greatness is present, the waves of the air are stirred. The English are fortunate in having not only the greatest poet in the world, but one whose sense of good and evil is nearly unerring. Almost every type of character,

<sup>1</sup> Church, *Spenser* (English Men of Letters) p. 151.

and every interest of human beings, except religion and science, are to be found in Shakespeare. There is virtue and vice, greatness and pettiness, Claudius and Iachimo and Iago as well as Horatio and Imogen and Cordelia, Polonius and Osric as well as Kent and Paulina; but there is no doubt about the difference of good and evil. There is tragedy, down to those depths of gloom in which *Troilus and Cressida* was written; but in the darkness Shakespeare never forgot the existence of light, and by the side of characters like Pandarus and Helen and Ajax, whose worthlessness is more depressing than villainy, created the generous simplicity of Troilus and the wisdom of Ulysses. It is not a question of preaching morals about Shakespearean texts but of simply reading the plays in the spirit in which they were written. To see Lear and Gloucester, Edmund and Regan, Cordelia and Kent as their creator saw them is to share his vision of human good and evil, and to know what he thought first-rate; that in itself is a great education of character. Anyone steeped so deeply in Shakespeare as to absorb him can safely read Wycherley or *Don Juan*, if he wishes to read them. He will have a standard by which to choose and to reject.

The first-rate in human nature and conduct is present abundantly in history and literature, and we have only to look to see it there. But a

further problem arises. Good and bad, corn and tares, grow indiscriminately in these fields. Attila, Caesar Borgia, Richelieu, Frederick the Great, Hitler are in a sense great men: Villon, Boccaccio, the Restoration dramatists are in their way first-rate: yet it is not this kind of excellence that we are seeking, nor should we exhibit as ideals of character and conduct Richelieu and Wolsey, or Heine, Stendhal and Byron, great though they are. Literature and history, like life itself, are a chaos of good and evil, and the evil is mixed with the good. Anyone plunged into this chaos runs great risks. At worst, he may be attracted, infected and corrupted by wrong or false ideals; at least he will be confused and drawn insensibly different ways, growing up with a dissociated personality which lacks unity of spiritual standards and values. The more sensitive and imaginative the character, the greater the danger. That is why Augustine, master of thought and passionate lover of poetry as he was, breaks out into a denunciation of education: 'Woe to thee, stream of human tradition! Who can resist thee? How long wilt thou sweep away the sons of Eve into that vast and stormy sea, which scarcely those who have embarked on the Cross can sail safely?' And again: 'Who can unravel this twisted and tangled skein? It is ugly: let me not look at it.'<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Confessions*, I. 16; II. 10 (tr. Bigg—mainly).

Our aim is to mould character on the principles of what we have come to call Christian civilisation, achieving at lowest the 'natural end of man—virtue and well-being in community'.<sup>1</sup> We must see that we do it, and allow nothing to hamper or defeat our purpose. That raises the difficulty felt by Augustine and the question asked by Plato, which puts the problem clearly and demands a frank answer. 'Youth is the time when the character is being moulded and easily takes any impress one may wish to stamp on it. Then shall we simply allow our children to listen to any stories that anyone happens to make up and so receive into their minds ideas often the very opposite of those we shall think they ought to have when they are grown up?'<sup>2</sup> The problem lies there. It is the biggest problem anyone concerned with education has to answer, for it deals with the greatest task of education. One must not run away from it or let it slip out of mind.

Shall we expurgate? Expurgation, in any but a limited degree, is impossible. How can history be expurgated? How can brilliant villainy and successful crime be ignored? The difficulty is illustrated by the Bible, where cruelty and love, truth and treachery, high religion and narrow nationalism elbow each other; where the tricks of Jacob, and the extermination of cities are bound in

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot.

<sup>2</sup> *Republic*, 377.

one volume with the Sermon on the Mount; where the word 'blessed' is applied to the merciful, to 'those who dash their enemies' children against the stones and to Jael who treacherously murdered a fugitive foe. How can such a book be expurgated? Anyone who tries to cut unchristian elements out of the Old Testament will soon despair of his task.<sup>1</sup> And yet what dangers the Bible presents! How often during the ages the devil has cited scripture for his purpose and 'evil souls produced holy witness'! There is point in Oscar Wilde's remark: 'When I think of all the harm that book has done, I despair of ever writing anything to equal it.' The history of religion shows the disastrous effects of reading the Bible without discrimination, and treating the Beatitudes and Samuel's order to kill the Amalekites as if they were equally inspired. But history and literature are sometimes taught much as the Covenanters read the Bible,<sup>2</sup> and as little distinction drawn between the good and evil in them. We must distinguish, though we cannot expurgate.

History (for our present purpose) is a picture gallery, where we pause longest before the portraits of greatness, learning to distinguish the permanent stars of the human firmament from the

<sup>1</sup> It has, however, been done admirably for the Psalms in *A School Psalter*, by R. B. Henderson.

<sup>2</sup> Cp. the picture of the Covenanters in *Old Mortality*.



meteors, no less brilliant for the moment, which flash across the sky and vanish, and not so dazzled as to confuse greatness with goodness. Between 1770 and 1870 three men changed the face of Europe and altered the course of history—Frederick the Great, Napoleon, and Bismarck. Most readers are dazzled by their genius and achievements and ignore the perhaps more permanent result of their lives—that they impressed on the plastic mind of man a false ideal. Who can measure its corrupting and destructive power? Greatness does not excuse vice or crime, but it enlarges their influence; ‘If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness.’ If there is any truth in the Christian conception of life, if civilisation consists in the advance of justice, mercy and truth, in substituting co-operation for struggle, and a growing sense of the meaning of man’s duty to his neighbour, it would have been better for the world if these three great men had never been born; Europe has paid and is paying for their lives in rivers of blood. Their political achievements are well described in Augustine’s words: *Remota iustitia quid sunt regna nisi magna latrocinia?* ‘Banish justice and what are empires but large-scale brigandage?’ We can hold this view without becoming quietists, pacifists or anarchists. Political power, empires, statesmen and statesmanship, are not incompatible with justice, as the career of

another great man shows, whose life falls within the same period, Abraham Lincoln; or that of President Masaryk, who worked in a smaller field but deserves to be ranked with Lincoln as the ideal democratic statesman. Both are associated with political struggle, and with four years of war. We can measure the gulf separating Lincoln from Frederick the Great and Bismarck—a gulf as wide as that between heaven and hell—by the famous words of the Second Inaugural:

The Almighty has His own purposes. 'Woe unto the world because of offenses! for it must needs be that offenses come; but woe to that man by whom the offense cometh.' If we shall suppose that American slavery is one of those offenses, which, in the providence of God, must needs come, but which, having continued through His appointed time, He now wills to remove, and that He gives to both North and South this terrible war, as the woe due to those by whom the offense came, shall we discern therein any departure from those divine attributes which the believers in a living God always ascribe to Him? Fondly do we hope—ferently do we pray—that this mighty scourge of war may speedily pass away. Yet, if God wills that it continue until all the wealth piled by the bondman's two hundred and fifty years of unrequited toil shall be sunk, and until every drop of blood drawn with the lash shall be paid with another drawn with the sword; as was said three thousand years ago, so still it must be said, 'The judgments of the Lord are true and righteous altogether.'

With malice toward none; with charity for all; with firmness in the right, as God gives us to see the right, let us strive on to finish the work we are in; to bind up the nation's wounds, to care for him who shall have borne the battle, and for his widow, and his orphan—to do all which may achieve and cherish a just and lasting peace among ourselves, and with all nations.

Let us, then study Frederick, Napoleon and Bismarck, recognise their greatness to the full, and appreciate whatever is good in them and their work, but let us place by their side men like Lincoln and Masaryk, and mark the contrast. If we are told that moral judgments are out of place in the study of history, we can shelter ourselves behind the authority of the greatest of recent English historians, who, well aware of another view, wrote:

The weight of opinion is against me when I exhort you never to debase the moral currency or to lower the standard of rectitude, but to try others by the final maxim that governs your own lives, and to suffer no man and no cause to escape the undying penalty which history has the power to inflict on wrong. The plea in extenuation of guilt and mitigation of punishment is perpetual. At every step we are met by arguments which go to excuse, to palliate, to confound right and wrong, and reduce the just man to the level of the reprobate.... So that we have no common code; our moral notions are always fluid; and you must consider the times, the class from which men sprang, the sur-

rounding influences, the masters in their schools, the preachers in their pulpits, the movement they obscurely obeyed, and so on, until responsibility is merged in numbers, and not a culprit is left for execution. A murderer was no criminal if he followed local custom, if neighbours approved, if he was encouraged by official advisers or prompted by just authority, if he acted for the reason of state or the pure love of religion, or if he sheltered himself behind the complicity of the law. The depression of morality was flagrant; but the motives were those which have enabled us to contemplate with distressing complacency the secret of unhallowed lives.<sup>1</sup>

Unless we follow Acton's maxim, unless we judge, unless we clearly distinguish greatness from goodness, history has as much power to corrupt as to instruct; it ceases to be an instrument of moral education.

That is true of literature also. There, too, flowers and weeds grow together and some of the flowers are bright but poisonous. It is easier to expurgate literature than history, and almost everyone would agree to some amount of expurgation. Nobody puts into a child's hands books condemned by the law as obscene, nor even every page of the great writers of the world. But there are obvious dangers in expurgation, and they have been put clearly by Cardinal Newman in a lecture to a Catholic

<sup>1</sup> Acton, *The Study of History*.

University which is one of the best discussions on the subject. He is talking of university education; but *mutatis mutandis* his words apply to schools:

If Literature is to be made a study of human nature, you cannot have a Christian Literature. It is a contradiction in terms to attempt a sinless Literature of sinful men. You may gather together something very great and high, something higher than any Literature ever was; and when you have done so, you will find that it is not Literature at all. You will have simply left the delineation of man, as such, and have substituted for it, as far as you have had anything to substitute, that of man, as he is or might be, under certain special advantages. Give up the study of man, as such, if so it must be; but say you do so. Do not say you are studying him, his history, his mind and his heart, when you are studying something else. Man is a being of genius, passion, intellect, conscience, power. He exercises these various gifts in various ways, in great deeds, in great thoughts, in heroic acts, in hateful crimes. . . . Such is man: put him aside, keep him before you; but, whatever you do, do not take him for what he is not, for something more divine and sacred.<sup>1</sup>

Literature, then, ceases to be a portrait of man, if everything that falls below Christian standards is eliminated from it; and further, so treated, its study ceases to be a preparation for the life into which its pupils go.

<sup>1</sup> *The Scope and Nature of University Education*, Chap. 8.

We cannot possibly keep them from plunging into the world, with all its ways and principles and maxims, when their time comes; but we can prepare them against what is inevitable; and it is not the way to learn to swim in troubled waters, never to have gone into them. Proscribe (I do not merely say particular authors, particular works, particular passages) but Secular Literature as such; cut out from your class books all broad manifestations of the natural man; and those manifestations are waiting for your pupil's benefit at the very doors of your lecture room in living and breathing substance. They will meet him there in all the charm of novelty, and all the fascination of genius or of amiableness. To-day a pupil, to-morrow a member of the great world: to-day confined to the Lives of the Saints, to-morrow thrown upon Babel;—thrown on Babel, without the honest indulgence of wit and humour and imagination ever permitted to him, without any fastidiousness of taste wrought into him, without any rule given him for discriminating 'the precious from the vile', beauty from sin, the truth from the sophistry of nature, what is innocent from what is poison. You have refused him the masters of human thought, who would in some sense have educated him because of their incidental corruption. You have shut up from him those whose thoughts strike home to our hearts, whose words are proverbs, whose names are indigenous to all the world, the standard of their mother tongue, and the pride and boast of their countrymen, Homer, Ariosto, Cervantes, Shakespeare, because the old Adam smelt rank in them; and for what have you reserved him? You have given him 'a liberty unto' the multitudinous blasphemy of his day; you have made him free of its newspapers, its reviews, its magazines, its novels, its

controversial pamphlets, of its Parliamentary debates, its law proceedings, its platform speeches, its songs, its drama, its theatre, of its enveloping, stifling atmosphere of death.<sup>1</sup>

Ruthless expurgation is a moral danger.

To expurgate literature is as impossible as to exterminate microbes, but we can take the same measures against its corruptions as we take against microbes. Some of the worst can be destroyed or avoided; we can make people aware of the existence and character of others; and we can immunise human beings from their attack by building up the general health, till it is strong enough to resist infection. 'The mischief', as Newman says, 'is to be met not with argument, not by protests and warnings, but by means of the great counterfascination of purity and truth.' Bring people up in the company of the first-rate, whether in art, thought, morals, or anything else and they will instinctively detect what is inferior. Anyone used to good pictures, good wine, good literature or good men, is not likely to care for bad pictures, bad wine, bad literature or bad men, and needs no further protection than the standard insensibly implanted by living with the first-rate. Reading the poetry of Aeschylus, says a character in Browning, has somehow spoilt my taste for twitterings; and provided that it does not make them

<sup>1</sup> *Ib.*

conceited or inhuman, men need to have their taste spoilt for twitterings, and most of all in the things that are most important.

Naturally we read contemporary literature, which mirrors the interests, movements and problems of the day, is easily intelligible, and may include writers destined for immortality. But to read nothing else is to have no standards of comparison, to be narrow and provincial, to risk confusing the ephemeral with the eternal, the cry of the day with the music of the spheres. I saw recently a course of lectures on Housman, Galsworthy, Shaw, Somerset Maugham, James Joyce and others, advertised under the title 'Some authors worth reading'. In one sense the description was justified; all these writers are able craftsmen and in different ways documents on their time. But an equally descriptive title would have been 'Some authors not worth reading'; no one would learn from any of them what, in the full sense of the words, goodness and greatness are. That is one use of reading 'the classics', Greek, Latin or more recent. They give perspective and proportion to our view of our own times; they have a quality of which 'the world is impatient; it chafes against it, rails at it, insults it, hates it; it ends by receiving its influence and undergoing its law. This quality at last inexorably corrects the world's blunders, and procures that the popular



poet shall not finally pass for a Pindar, nor the popular historian for a Tacitus, nor the popular preacher for a Bossuet' (Matthew Arnold). These are delusions from which it is better to be free.

If then we are needing literature to give the vision of what is spiritually first-rate, to form character, and moral standards, we must select what is first-rate in these fields and reject what is not. Some writers are good for our purpose and others are bad, others neutral. If we are looking for the first-rate in ideals and conduct, we shall choose Isaiah, not the Book of Judges; Virgil, not Ovid; Shakespeare, not Marlowe; Milton, not Congreve; Johnson, not Sterne; Shelley, not Byron; George Meredith, not George Moore; Robert Bridges, not A. E. Housman. Even among those writers whom we admit, we shall make a further selection, preferring those—such as Aeschylus and Plato, Shakespeare and Dante—who, of all Europeans, have seen farthest and reached highest and best reveal the greatness of human nature. Then our pupils will see the first-rate and learn the difference between *quod semper*, *quod ubique*, *quod ab omnibus*, and *quod aliquando*, *quod alicubi*, *quod a nonnullis*.

'What!' you may say, 'Are we not to read Congreve or *Don Juan* or A. E. Housman; or any other writers whom you put on an arbitrary *Index expurgatorius*? Plato, Shakespeare and Dante, by

all means, but why not the others too? They have, in their different degrees, literary power, beauty, genius; and some of them are already ranked among the immortals by the secure verdict of time.'

Yes, certainly let us read them, but let us realise what we are reading and why. Poetry may be great, yet barren of the highest things in human nature and life. Literary and spiritual excellence are separate things and the one may exist without the other. But, as in history we are dazzled by greatness, so in literature we are dazzled by genius. Greatness in a statesman, genius in a poet are realities with a value of their own and it is perverse to deny their reality and value, but it is equally perverse to let them blind us to the presence of spiritual and moral littleness. Unless either moral goodness, nobility of mind, spiritual greatness are mere words, or literature has no concern with life, writers, like statesmen, should be judged separately, on both counts.

This may sound a platitude, yet in fact we often fail to make the distinction and read unaware of what we are reading. Take, for instance, two popular authors of the last fifty years, Edward Fitzgerald and A. E. Housman. Fitzgerald's *Omar Khayyam* was a favourite with the last generation and read with whole-hearted admiration by many persons who would have been horrified by his

view of life, had not their minds been lulled by the sonorous words into unconsciousness of the meaning:

We are no other than a moving row  
 Of magic Shadow-shapes that come and go  
     Round with the Sun-illuminated Lantern held  
 In Midnight by the Master of the Show;  
 But helpless Pieces of the Game he plays  
 Upon this Chequer-board of Nights and Days....  
 O Thou, who Man of baser Earth didst make,  
 And even with Paradise devise the Snake:  
     For all the Sin wherewith the face of Man  
 Is blackened—Man's forgiveness give—and take.

How many orthodox Christians have read those lines, fascinated by their stately movement and music and quite unaware of their gloomy determinism, their indictment of theism!

In this generation the place of Fitzgerald has been taken by A. E. Housman, who has in a higher degree the same qualities of music of words and mastery of form, and a pessimism more self-centred, more self-pitying, with a touch of abjectness which is remote from the dignity and self-restraint of the Victorian writer. Some readers of Housman are probably unaware of his meaning—otherwise his *Collected Poems* would not be among the books at a School Prize-Day—and more have not fully realised the implications of his view of life. They are too fascinated by his poetry,

as poetry, to attend to what he is saying. But that is not true of all his readers, as the experience of an English lecturer in Japan shows:

I thought A. E. Housman would be a good English poet to read. The English is very clear, and it is all a bit gloomy, so I thought they would like it all right. And I like it very much myself, so I thought I'd be able to put it over.... I think Housman would have been a good deal shocked by what they made of him. In fact, I am not sure that Housman might not have felt ashamed of himself if he had read those little essays. Because he does literally say what they thought he did, when you come to look at it.... This is what one of them wrote down, almost literally, and most of them took the same line: 'I think Housman is quite right. We will do no good to anyone by dying for our country, but we will be admired and we all want to be admired, and anyway we are better dead.'<sup>1</sup>

The naïve Japanese were no doubt far more ignorant of Housman than their teacher, but they understood him better; and we should imitate them.

The story may also serve to remind us that we can be poisoned by other things than an overdose of sex. Actually our literature has been less sex-ridden than that of some other countries; the puritanism of the English tradition and perhaps a natural sanity and balance in the English mind have saved us till recently from losing a sense of

<sup>1</sup> *Listener*, 1 January 1942.

proportion and allowing a fraction of life to seem its greater part; still more from confusing lust with love. But 'sexual respectability, however important, is not the whole and final concern of life',<sup>1</sup> and literature can be pernicious without being immoral or obscene. The cynicism of *Don Juan* is as ignoble and injurious as any immorality in the poem; the morals of Burns were not much better than Byron's, but his generosity of spirit and sense of goodness are a liberal education; while many writers, who would pass the most censorious censor, can corrupt the mind by their attitude to life.

The same problem—that of choosing one's company—must be faced in literature as in life; it has similar implications and should lead to similar results. 'Will you gossip with your chambermaid or your stable-boy, when you may talk with kings and queens?' There are attractions in the company of stable-boys; they have their own special range of experience and knowledge, and may even be more entertaining and less embarrassing associates than royalty. So, too, with literature. A poet may be a genius, an artist, a master of music and language, and at the same time he may be worthless as a man, or the atmosphere in which he lives may be unhealthy or poisonous. We may read him for

<sup>1</sup> Sampson, *Concise Cambridge History of English Literature*, p. 504.

his other qualities; though a stable-boy as a man, he may be a king as a writer; but we should realise when he is a stable-boy, and when he is a king. I do not suggest that we should refuse to read writers of modern or ancient times, in whom genius or talent is united with a view of life which we reject; still less that we should read bad poets or writers, because their morals are sound—spiritual excellence does not turn bad poetry into good. I only urge that we should distinguish art and morals, greatness as a poet and greatness as a man; that in reading literature we should be quite clear why we are reading it. Is it for the language or the music, or for the thought? Is it the technique, or the revelation of life that attracts us: beauty, desired because it is beauty and no more, or a beauty in which the highest ranges of human thought and action are revealed? In literature, as in other things, it is possible both to admire and to condemn: and, if we are to have standards in life as well as in art, both are necessary.

Let me sum up. I began by saying that if we are to have a new world, we need human beings to make and live in it, and that we must not leave their education to chance. In the past, men accepted the Christian ideal even if they did not live the Christian life; a child born in the nineteenth century had its mind formed unconsciously by the atmosphere and beliefs around it. There is no such

definite formative influence to-day and we must find one. I suggested that education could help to do this, if it showed its pupils the first-rate in life and character as they are revealed in history and literature. All Englishmen should have what Plato wished for his ruling class:

We would not have our Guardians grow up among representations of moral deformity, as in some foul pasture where, day after day, feeding on every poisonous weed they would, little by little, gather insensibly a mass of corruption in their very souls. Rather we must seek out those craftsmen whose instinct guides them to whatsoever is lovely and gracious; so that our young men, dwelling in a wholesome climate, may drink in good from every quarter, whence, like a breeze bearing health from happy regions, some influence from noble works constantly falls upon eye and ear from childhood upward, and imperceptibly draws them into sympathy and harmony with the beauty of reason, whose impress they take.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 401, tr. Cornford.

## CHAPTER IV

### FROM ATMOSPHERE TO REASON

OUR fundamental need and a chief task of education to-day is to form the right attitude to life and to give what our age lacks, clear values and definite standards. In childhood this must be in the form of an instinctive attitude to life, but not a philosophy of it; an attitude that comes from living with what is first-rate, and so acquiring a sense of it, a love for it, an instinctive repugnance to its opposite. That is as much as can be done in earlier years, as, long ago, Plato saw: 'As for wisdom and firm, true belief, a man is fortunate if he acquires them in advancing years; to possess them with all their attendant blessings is to have reached the full stature of man. But by education I mean goodness in the form in which it is first acquired by a child. If pleasure and pain, liking and dislike, are formed in the soul on right lines before the age of understanding is reached, and if, when that age is attained, these feelings are in concord with reason, thanks to early discipline in the right habits—then this concord, regarded as a whole, is virtue. But if you consider one factor in it, the rightly disciplined attitude to pleasures and pains, by which a man from first to last hates what he should hate and loves what he should love—if you isolate this



factor and call it education, you will be giving it its true name.'<sup>1</sup>

A definite philosophy comes late (Plato thinks 'in advancing years'). Goodness indeed must be acquired by children but acquired in non-rational form, as a habit of feeling pleasure and pain at the right things, hating what should be hated and loving what should be loved. This right feeling comes from early training in the right habits; and this training is the essence of early education—Plato reserves the word education for it; but as people grow up and learn to use their reason, the grounds for these habits are seen and a rational philosophy develops which justifies, explains and fortifies them. It is important that it should develop, for though without the right habits there will be no philosophy or the wrong one, without the philosophy even the best habits are insecure. Atmosphere is transitory, attitudes can change, habits may lose their hold, and none of them have the strength of a rational conviction about life. 'True opinions', as Plato said, 'are a fine thing and their results altogether good, so long as they stay with us; only they will not stay long, but run away out of the human soul, and so they are of little value, unless one fastens them by the tie of cause.'<sup>2</sup> Or, as one might say, an opinion based merely on habit has a shallow foundation which

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 653.

*Meno*, 97 f.

needs to be driven deeper into the firm rock of reason. The vision of goodness in history and literature nourishes goodness in the soul; but the ideals which these subjects contain are at best unsystematic and though they imply a view of life, they do not define or state it, and an education confined to them 'sets up culture in the place of Religion and leaves Religion to be laid waste by the anarchy of feeling'.<sup>1</sup> So in the later years at school the pupil should be at least introduced to a rational philosophy of life. But what philosophy?

A critic may have already asked on what principle certain men and authors were selected in the last chapter as patterns of the first-rate in human ideals and conduct. Why Socrates, St Bernard, Sir Thomas More, Shaftesbury, Lincoln, Masaryk, rather than Frederick the Great, Napoleon and Bismarck? Why Aeschylus, Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, Wordsworth, Robert Bridges, rather than Villon, Marlowe, Congreve, Sterne, Byron, Heine, Stendhal, Housman? It is not a question of mere greatness—if so, the choice, at least in some cases, might have been different—but of what is first-rate in ideals and conduct. And on this latter score, why this selection? On what general principle is it based?

I might reply that it is based on the principle of *quod semper, quod ubique, quod ab omnibus*, that all

<sup>1</sup> T. S. Eliot, *Selected Essays*, p. 384.

ages and universal assent would regard most of these men as masters in the art of living. They have outsoared the shadow of our night, and shine beyond question permanent stars of the human firmament. The science, the politics, the commercial and industrial systems, the social life of the age of Aeschylus or Plato or Dante or Shakespeare have passed away and become matters of antiquarian interest, but the writings of these men, mere words, preserved on the most fragile of materials, have survived, as fresh and living as on the day when they were written down. They meet some permanent need not only of their own epoch but of all time, and in a world of change and death possess the secret of immortality. *Securus judicat orbis*; the judgment of the world is hard to challenge, and its judgment on Plato, Dante, Shakespeare and even on Shelley and Wordsworth, is not likely to change.

Is there any common element in these writers, any philosophy discernible in their writings? One's first instinct would be to say 'no'; they are so different, they come from such different peoples, times and civilisations; and most of them are not systematic thinkers or philosophers in the current sense of the word. Yet, whatever their differences, they belong to one family, a strain with strongly stamped characters, which no one could confuse with the other great civilisations of the world,

Indian or Chinese: and if we ask what stamped these characters on them, there is only one reply—Greece, Rome, Palestine. Our civilisation, spiritual and intellectual, was born in Greece; Rome applied Greek thought to the life and institutions of a great empire; Christianity added new forces which modified and developed its Græco-Roman inheritance. We are not Greeks, Romans or Jews, but our air is charged with influences from Greece, Rome and Palestine. However ignorant we may be of them, they will mould us. However we may react from them, we bear their marks. A man may know nothing of Greek thought and literature; he may be an agnostic or an atheist; but Greece, Rome and Christianity have made Western Civilisation, permeate its thought, morals, literature and institutions, and touch its members at every moment of their lives. It is as well, for they are the oxygen in its atmosphere and if they disappeared from it, its life would cease. It is characteristic of the weakness of our education, that most people know nothing of Greece and an increasing number know little of Judaism or Christianity.

The genius of Western civilisation is summed up completely and briefly in the lines:

Think on the seed ye spring from! Ye were made  
Not to live life of brute beasts of the field,  
But follow virtue and knowledge unafraid.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Inferno*, xxvi. 118 (Laurence Binyon's translation).

In the name of this double ideal the Ulysses of Dante calls on his men to venture on the unknown Atlantic; it inspired Bishop Foxe in founding Corpus Christi College, Oxford, in 1516, and appears in the preamble to his Statutes as the aim of higher education:

We have no abiding city here, but we seek one to come in heaven, at which we hope to arrive with the greater ease and despatch, if while we travel in this life, we rear a ladder whereby we may gain a readier ascent. We give the name of virtue to the right side of the ladder, and that of knowledge to the left....

The words reveal their origin; ἀρετή and ἐπιστήμη inspired the life and thought of Ancient Greece, passed thence into the vocabulary of Europe, and gave our civilisation the double but indivisible ideal of virtue and knowledge. The word virtue was continually reinterpreted: but we recognise *idées mères* of our own civilisation in the cardinal virtues of Plato—Wisdom, Courage, Temperance and Justice, and in the longer list of Aristotle which adds to these Intelligence, Moral Insight, Liberality, Munificence, High-Mindedness, Right Ambition, Good Temper, Friendliness, Truth, Just Resentment, Modesty. Christianity, in the Beatitudes and elsewhere in the New Testament, but most of all in the life of its Founder, modified and added to, but did not supersede this vision of human goodness, a composite yet harmonious

ideal which inspires and pervades Western civilisation and gives it amid all its differences a certain unity of direction. Therefore, in education, to form the growing mind and character, we shall choose writers and men who are most permeated by this ideal and in whom it appears at its purest and greatest, not those in whom it is diluted or distorted or who are in rebellion or reaction against it; Lincoln and Masaryk, not Napoleon or Bismarck or Hitler; Plato, Dante, Shakespeare, Shelley, Wordsworth, not Marlowe, Sterne, Byron, Heine. Here is the main stream of the river, here is the current which leads to the sea, and here the boats of youth must be launched, not in back-eddies and side-streams.

I have now implicitly answered the question asked above—to what philosophy our education should lead, when we pass from atmosphere to a reasoned view of life, and floating influences and impressions crystallise into a rational conviction. It will be the philosophy which lies behind that atmosphere and those influences. If Greek thought and Christianity created the soul of Western civilisation, formed its mind and are the vitamins in its life-blood, then these are the philosophies for which we are looking, and before his education is completed everyone should have an idea what they are. Many people never realise the connection

between them; some even oppose them to each other. But in history and in Christian thought the two are linked indissolubly. Christianity surviving from the downfall of the ancient world salved and adapted Roman organisation and Greek thought, and incorporated both in the new house that it built for Western civilisation. The West owes to Greece the conclusions about God and conduct which the human mind reached without revelation and which we call natural religion and natural morals (is there any nobler or more concise expression of the latter than Plato's words 'Goodness is the health, beauty and well-being of the soul; evil is its disease, deformity and weakness').<sup>1</sup> A knowledge of these should enter into any scheme of higher education, so that people can enter life with a reasoned philosophy of it and not merely with good habits.

Some people may wonder why I suggest that the best introduction to natural religion and morals is through Greek thought, and that every educated person should have an acquaintance with it. The answer is partly given in some words of T. H. Green. From Socrates and his followers

comes the connected scheme of virtues and duties within which the educated conscience of Christendom still moves, when it is impartially reflecting on what ought to be done.... The articulated scheme of what

<sup>1</sup> *Republic*, 444.

the virtues and duties are, in their difference and in their unity, remains for us now in its main outlines what the Greek philosophers left it. . . . Once for all they conceived and expressed the conception of a free or pure morality, as resting on what we may venture to call a disinterested interest in the good; of the several virtues as so many applications of that interest to the main relations of social life; of the good itself not as anything external to the capacities virtuously exercised in its pursuit, but as their full realisation. . . . When we come to ask ourselves what are the essential forms in which, however otherwise modified, the will for true good (which is the will to be good) must appear, our answer follows the outlines of the Greek classification of the virtues. It is the will to know what is true, to make what is beautiful; to endure pain and fear, to resist the allurements of pleasure (i.e. to be brave and temperate), if not, as the Greek would have said, in the service of the state, yet in the interest of some form of human society; to take for oneself, to give to others, of those things which admit of being given and taken, not what one is inclined to but what is due.<sup>1</sup>

Not only did the Greeks create the theory of natural morals, but their exposition of it has certain advantages over any other. They produced, in the *Republic* of Plato and the *Ethics* of Aristotle, two text-books on morals, which are unlike other text-books in being written by men of genius. Further, they have a simplicity and directness which belong to pioneers and are impossible to a later age. 'The Greeks', said Nietzsche, 'are

<sup>1</sup> *Prolegomena to Ethics*, § 249 f.



simple, like genius; that is why they are the immortal teachers.' No one begins to study the geography of a district on a six-inch-to-the-mile map; he starts with one of smaller scale, which shows main features in clear relief and omits confusing detail. It is equally foolish to commence the study of morals or politics either on large maps of them or on inferior small ones. In every subject the most exhaustive book is the worst for the beginner; and if he is sensible, he chooses one which will fix in his mind essential points and main problems, before he proceeds to complications and refinements. Because they are such books, the *Republic*, the *Ethics* and the *Politics* are incomparable introductions to moral and political questions.

If I were asked what knowledge of Greek thought might reasonably be given in the later school years, I would suggest that the pupil should at least be introduced, if possible to Aristotle, and certainly to Socrates, Plato and the Stoics and to the conception of *areté*, which runs like a gold thread through the achievement of Greece. There is no equivalent for the word *areté* in English, though there is plenty of the thing in English life. It is 'virtue' not in the modern but in the old sense of the word; 'excellence' with no moral sense necessarily attaching to it. Everything, the Greeks said, has a use, a function, a virtue of which it is

capable. Take things as different as a knife, an eye, a doctor. Each of them has a use and is capable of a virtue. A knife's use is to cut, an eye's to see, a doctor's to keep or make us well; and their virtue is achieved when they fulfil their use and function. If they do this, we call them good, if they fail, they are bad—as knives, eyes, doctors. Hence, the task and problem of each of them is to fulfil its function and so achieve its virtue. It is an argument in which it is difficult to see a flaw.

But what is true of knives and eyes, is true, the Greeks thought, of men also. They too must have a function, a use, a virtue of which they are capable and which it is their business to achieve; and in so far as they achieve it, we shall call them good. It is easier to see the function and virtue of an eye or a knife than of a man: and in fact he has many functions, and therefore many virtues to strive after. A human being is a member of a family—as son or daughter, husband or wife, father or mother; he is a citizen, a member of a state; he has a profession or occupation; in each of these roles he has a different function, and in each function is capable of a virtue, an excellence, which consists in doing the particular job well, in being a good son or daughter, a good citizen, good in his occupation—whether it is that of Prime Minister or of shop assistant. He, no less than the knife or the eye, is judged by the way in which, in each

particular capacity, he does the job in question well. But that is not enough. Man is more than a citizen, a parent or child, a person with an occupation; he is also a human being and in that capacity, too, is capable of a virtue. As a human being he has a body, an intellect and a character, and his business is to make the most of each of these, and see that all three are developed to the excellence of which they are capable, used rightly and used to the full. He must aim at *areté*, at virtue, in all.

This was the clue which the Greeks followed through the labyrinth of life. Its business, they thought, is to seek the highest and make the most, of whatever a man is or does. They admired every kind of virtue, of excellence, sought after them and tried to create a society in which they could be achieved: and this ideal, this purpose partly explains why in so many fields of life they achieved an excellence which, long after they have perished, remains a model and an inspiration.

There may be better ends, but this is not a mean one, and it is simple, intelligible, convincing and practical. It leaves money in the right place. It is a perpetual challenge in hours of doubt, weariness, slackness, pessimism. It is a philosophy consistent with Christianity; only, where Plato and Aristotle thought, not unplausibly, that the Reason was the noblest thing in man, and the highest life, there-

fore, the life of the Reason as lived by poets, artists, philosophers and men of science, St Paul has a different conception of the highest virtue, and has expounded his view of human excellence in the 13th chapter of the first Epistle to the Corinthians. The Greek ideal may seem too impersonal to *English minds*. Yet among all peoples it is the motive force in the creative artist, who seeks perfection for its own sake through language, or paint, or stone, or sound: and outside the ranks of artists, many people are driven on by it to do in their special field the best work of which they are capable. In it there is something, which lies at the heart of all morals, the passionate desire for good, simply because it is good.<sup>1</sup>

The ideal of *areté* is a moral philosophy in itself, and this conception of excellence as something to be sought in every sphere and activity is a valuable corrective to our narrower idea of virtue. Apart from it, every educated person ought to have some knowledge of certain individual Greek thinkers. Socrates, Plato, Aristotle, and Epictetus and Marcus Aurelius among the Stoics, are the most important for our purpose, in themselves and because of their influence on the world, and every pupil after the age of seventeen, who is capable of receiving it, should be given some idea of them;

<sup>1</sup> For a further account of *areté* see *Greek Ideals and Modern Life*, by Sir R. Livingstone, p. 69 f.

of Socrates for the example of his life and the stimulus and intellectual discipline of his thought, of Plato, because he is not only one of the great religious thinkers of the world but also in the direct line that leads to Christianity. 'Every problem which Plato discusses is still alive to-day.'<sup>1</sup>

Aristotle is more difficult. His influence on human thought has been enormous, though different from Plato's. In morals and in politics, as in natural history, his approach to a subject is scientific and inductive. But his gritty style and prosy manner are not attractive, and though there are many translations of his *Ethics* (some extremely bad), there is as yet none with notes for English readers.<sup>2</sup> Still the *Ethics* is one of the great books of the world: it propounds a clear, rational, noble view of the art of living; and it is fascinating and stimulating to take his list of the separate virtues, and his detailed account of each, and compare these with our own views on the subject, seeing where we should agree or differ, where we have gone beyond Aristotle, and where we can learn from him.<sup>3</sup>

But, it will be said, do you expect everyone to learn Greek, and are you not adding an enormous

<sup>1</sup> Whitehead, *Adventures of Ideas*, p. 15. There is no more stimulating and instructive book on Western civilisation.

<sup>2</sup> Mr Rackham (whose translation in the Loeb Series is excellent) is preparing one.

<sup>3</sup> Books III. c. 6 to IV fin. These books and X. 6 to end are of most interest to the ordinary reader.

subject to an overcrowded curriculum? The answer to both these questions is 'No'. For anyone interested in literature and language to be ignorant of Greek is a great loss, but obviously only a small number of persons will learn it. But the others can easily make the acquaintance of Greek thought in the translations. Nor does the programme suggested here demand much time; though it contains nourishment for a life-time, its bulk is small. There is no question of an elaborate study of Plato, still less of the Stoics, whose moral thought alone concerns us. Half-a-dozen books on the shelves of the school library and effective encouragement to read them, in or out of school hours, open the door to a great world.<sup>1</sup>

In history and in thought Greece leads on to Christianity, and the teaching of this in schools raises the so-called problem of religious teaching. It is not too much to say that the spiritual future of this country depends on its right solution and on the solution being carried rightly into practice. In the last nineteen centuries Christianity has been the

<sup>1</sup> For Socrates and Plato, the *World's Classics Selections from Plato, The Republic*, translated and edited by Professor Cornford, *Portrait of Socrates*, by Sir R. Livingstone: for the Stoics, any good translation of Epictetus such as that in *Oxford Classical Translations*, and Marcus Aurelius in the same series. The above books on Plato are recommended because they have an introduction and notes for English readers; reading translations of Plato which give no such guidance is apt to be unprofitable.

greatest new fact in the history of Europe, which is unintelligible without some knowledge of it. It meets us in every stage and phase of our civilisation since the first century A.D., in politics and social life, in thought, literature, art, music, architecture. You may think it a deplorable incident in the development of man, but to anyone ignorant of it Western civilisation is a tapestry from which half the pattern has been cut out. Incidentally, its 'book' is both the finest monument of the English language and the greatest book in the world. Thus, quite apart from any religious reasons, some knowledge of Christianity must be given in education.

That raises the question what should be taught. Religious education is not a question of knowing the dates and authorship of the books of the Bible, or the meaning of phrases like 'the abomination of desolation', but of seeing Christianity as a way of living, as a life that was actually lived. The first and most important thing in it is the 'actual portrait,' preserved in the Synoptic Gospels, of a carpenter's son who, gathering some followers round him, taught, healed, and lived his life in Palestine, and was crucified by the Roman authorities. To see Christ so is to see Him as His contemporaries saw Him in Galilee and in Judaea during His earthly life; to see what convinced the men closest to Him and who knew Him best, that he was not an

ordinary man but the Son of God, convincing them not as

Light half-believers of a casual creed,

but so that they never hesitated for a moment to change their lives and to die for their conviction. That conviction of a few Jewish peasants in a minor dependency of the great and highly civilised Roman Empire seemed to most of its citizens an extravagant folly, but persisted as the Empire, apparently so stable and permanent, fell into collapse, and outlived every other creed and philosophy of the Graeco-Roman world. Thus much everyone must admit. It is a mere matter of fact. The facts recorded in the Gospels do not exhaust Christianity, but they are, in the witness of St John's Gospel, the most important part of it. "These things are written that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life through His name." To expound these facts, though it is not to teach Christianity, is to give the premises for it. It is to give more of it than was ever given to some of us in what were regarded as Christian schools. And anyone given so much has seen the Christian life, and the grounds of the Christian faith.<sup>1</sup>

This should lead to a knowledge of the Christian theory of life. The Life leads to the Creed. So it

<sup>1</sup> *The Future in Education*, p. 125 f.



was in the history of Christianity, where the Creed was a late growth, a belief to which the actual experience of Christians led, and which embodied that experience but did not precede it: the Nicene Creed was formulated 300 years after Christ's death; the Apostles' Creed is not earlier than the middle of the second century and received its final formulation much later.<sup>1</sup> The individual should travel by the same road as the early Christian community: he should arrive at the Creed, not start from it; and it will mean infinitely more to him, if he comes to it, as the early Christians did, as a rational account of facts which he knows and of an experience which he has had. That indeed is the road by which most, if not all, people do travel: they come to accept the Creed because after living and thinking it seems to them the most rational account of the facts of history and of their own experience; they may, of course, learn it at any age or stage but so learnt it is inert knowledge; only personal experience will bring it to life. That is the regular process and right method in all education—first practice, then theory; first the facts, then the formulation of a principle to explain them: 'education is the drawing and directing of youth towards that right reason which the law affirms and the experience of the eldest and best has affirmed to be right.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Probably the early Christian recited the Creed only once in his life, at his Baptism.

<sup>2</sup> Plato, *Levs*, 659.

This is<sup>1</sup> not to say that we can at any stage dispense with dogma. Some dogma is inevitable. To say that the teaching of Jesus, or any of it, conveys the truth about life, is a highly dogmatic statement, implying a very definite view about the universe and human nature; to say that the teaching is false or valueless is equally dogmatic; and it is also dogmatic to say that we cannot form an opinion on the matter but must suspend our judgment. Agnosticism, like theism or atheism, is dogmatic and there is no credit, least of all any intellectual credit, in halting between two opinions, when in fact you must *act* as if one or the other was true. *Only a people with the English indifference to logic* could have originated and approved an attempt to find an intellectual excuse for not making up the mind in matters where action is inevitable, and where any action implies a theory of conduct. Agnosticism enables English intellectuals conscientiously to indulge in the national vice of keeping thought and action apart, and concealing from the right hand what the left hand does.

How much dogma should be taught at school? The following suggestion by Professor L. A. Reid of Newcastle is worth our consideration:

There is one (and only one) living God, the Author and Sustainer of the universe, whose nature is wisdom and love. Whilst the existence and nature of God can be apprehended in many ways (e.g. through thought

in philosophy and scientific activity, or experience of beauty in nature and in art, through friendship and community of every kind and through suffering and joy), the Christian believes the nature and love of God to have been as completely embodied and revealed as it is possible for it to be revealed in a single human being, in the person, teaching, life and death of Christ. Not through his teaching alone (Christianity can never be reduced to a code of ethics) but through the quality of his life itself and in the manner of his death the Christian believes to be shown the very nature of God, of self-sacrificing love. The true and only true way of man's life he believes to be founded upon humble submission and confession before God. The Christian believes that only through the apprehension of the love of God and in freely given submission to His will can he properly understand the love of brother-man, and the Brotherhood of Man becomes a reflection of the Fatherhood of God. Christianity is humanistic but not merely humanistic. It believes that the sanctity and the equality of human beings are not *ultimately* human attributes but are derived from the purpose of God. And finally, this view of life is one which views ultimate reality not as material, but as spiritual and in some sense eternal.

Such a statement is of course very incomplete, and of course it would not be taught in this abstract form to children. It is a sort of 'jumping-off ground' for further thought and experience. It is a minimum, and as far as possible it avoids speculations. It asserts, for example, that the nature of God is revealed in Christ, but it does not attempt to formulate *how*.

It may be added that, whereas the Creed is composed of historical and theological affirmations,

which do not explicitly demand any particular conduct though no doubt they imply it, this statement stresses Christianity as a gospel of action and points definitely to the kind of action which it requires. That is an advantage; for Christianity is too often regarded, both by those who profess it and those who reject it, as an intellectual belief and not as a way of life; in teaching it is important to stress the latter aspect.

On some of these points there may be disagreement, but there can be no doubt that higher education is incomplete without some knowledge of Hellenism and of Christianity (to put these in their chronological order). If we were Indians or Chinese, it might be otherwise; but our origin and traditions are different; we can learn from the East but we belong to the civilisation of the West and shall neither understand nor master it, if we are ignorant of the rock from which we are hewn. Without some knowledge of Hellenism and Christianity men go into the world having, at best, a partial and inadequate view of human greatness and goodness, and lacking a clear idea how life should be lived. With it, we shall have met men at their highest and we shall know the two great European interpretations of the nature and destiny of man. The spirit, design and aim of Western civilisation will become clear, and we can follow it with intelligence, and some hope of success.

I quoted earlier<sup>1</sup> Mr Lippmann's criticism of American education, which describes a condition to which we are tending, if indeed we have not already reached it. The following passage from his lecture is equally worth our consideration:

It is said that since the invention of the steam engine we live in a new era, an era so radically different from all preceding ages that the cultural tradition is no longer relevant, is in fact misleading. I submit to you that this is a rationalisation, that this is a pretended reason for the educational void which we now call education. The real reason, I venture to suggest, is that we reject the religious and classical heritage, first, because to master it requires more effort than we are willing to compel ourselves to make, and, second, because it creates issues that are too deep and too contentious to be faced with equanimity. We have abolished the old curriculum because we are afraid of it, afraid to face any longer in a modern democratic society the severe discipline and the deep, disconcerting issues of the nature of the universe, and of man's place in it and of his destiny.... Modern education has renounced the idea that the pupil must learn to understand himself, his fellow men and the world in which he is to live as bound together in an order which transcends his immediate needs and his present desires. As a result the modern school has become bound to conceive the world as a place where the child, when he grows up, must compete with other individuals in a struggle for existence. And so the education of his reason and of his will must be designed primarily to facilitate his career. By separating educa-

<sup>1</sup> P. 28 f.

tion from the classical-religious tradition the school cannot train the pupil to look upon himself as an inviolable person because he is made in the image of God. These very words, though they are the noblest words in our language, now sound archaic. The school cannot look upon society as a brotherhood arising out of a conviction that men are made in a common image. The teacher has no subject matter that even pretends to deal with the elementary and universal issues of human destiny. The graduate of the modern school knows only by accident and by hearsay whatever wisdom mankind has come to in regard to the nature of men and their destiny.... The emancipated democracies have renounced the idea that the purpose of education is to transmit Western culture. Thus there is a cultural vacuum, and this cultural vacuum was bound to produce, in fact it has produced, progressive disorder. For the more men have become separated from the spiritual heritage which binds them together, the more has education become egoist, careerist, specialist and asocial.

These words accurately diagnose the disease of Western civilisation and suggest its cure.

‘But’, someone may object, ‘these are the methods of Hitler. Your ideal may lead in a different direction, but it has the same character. You wish to form the childish mind, when it is powerless to resist, to impose a view of life on it, to ignore its right to freedom. You will destroy the plant, so rare, delicate and precious in the human garden—the desire to see things as they are

undisturbed with his friends; make up your mind on these points, I express no opinion about them? Do you bring him up to believe that there is no distinction between right and wrong? But if so, are you not arbitrarily deciding the biggest of all questions? When you come to history, do you leave your child to suppose that Hitler is as good a model as Abraham Lincoln, that burning heretics is a sound method of propagating religion, that in the Industrial Revolution the champions of *laissez-faire* may have been right and their opponents wrong? Judgments on these points are more than a condemnation of persons and facts; they imply and rest on a definite view of life.' The fact is that the firmest believer in freedom moulds, or, if we prefer the phrase, tyrannises over, the mind of his child and takes liberty from it in the cradle.

It is fortunate that most people do try to implant a view of life in their children, for if they do not teach, the world does. Every film and newspaper and novel teaches. Every advertisement page, every platform on the Underground Railway preaches a sermon on the Virtue of Acquisitiveness. 'Here', they say, 'are goods necessary to your happiness, beer, motor-cars, whisky, cigarettes, permanent waves, "collars for discerning men": All can be bought for money; if you have money, they are yours—collars, whiskies, motor-cars, permanent waves.' The advertisers have no qualms

in enforcing their doctrine, no objectivity, no respect for delicate consciences, no interest or scruple about effects on character. They have something to sell and mean to sell it, and though they may not believe in Latin, their motto has been written in words of Horace which describe and denounce a Roman weakness:

*Rem facias, rem;*

*Si possis, recte; si non, quocunque modo rem:*

‘Make money, money; rightly, if you can; if not, by any means, money.’<sup>1</sup>

This hoarse clamour drowns the low voices of right values, reason, even of commonsense; the more important to make those voices ring in the ears of youth. Even so they may grow faint in later life.

For we exaggerate the power of teaching to fix the human mind unalterably. Jesuits may have claimed to be able to do it in the first seven years of life; yet not all their pupils have died good Catholics. Recent psychology has talked in the same strain, but the latest pronouncement on a subject is not the same thing as the last word on it. Facts point another way. Do children brought up well in good homes always grow into good men; have none of us discarded views in which as children we were carefully indoctrinated? Personally, I was brought up in a conservative atmo-

<sup>1</sup> *Epistles*, I. I, 65.



sphere and regarded Gladstone as an incarnation of evil; to-day, I am a liberal, and should look to the future more happily if I saw a modern Gladstone among our politicians. Most people have similar experiences. Liberty has outlived many tyrannies, and human nature, or rather human reason, has a way of asserting itself; *expellas furca, tamen usque recurret*; and perhaps the most constant law of human conduct is that extremes always produce reaction. The discipline of the Mediaeval Church is followed by the license of the Renaissance, the rule of the Saints by the Restoration Drama, the Classicism of the eighteenth century by the Romantic Revival, the photographic art of the nineteenth century by Surrealism and Cubism. The contemporaries of Tennyson could see no defects in him, their successors no merits. In one age human beings walk on the right side of the road; in the next they will be found in the ditch on the left. The one thing, alas! which they cannot do is to keep in the centre. And the danger, such as it is, of dominating a pupil's mind becomes negligible when the teacher is aware of it, believes in truth and has a respect for human personality; as he must if he has any respect either for Hellenism or for Christianity.

In the past totalitarianism and tyranny might conceivably have suppressed permanently any views but their own. In fact, they have not done

so. The invention of printing, while it has given dictators new weapons of great immediate effect, has enormously reduced their ultimate power. The Emperor Domitian was wise when, having executed the republican leaders, he destroyed their writings. 'His savagery attacked not only the authors but even their books, and the triumvirs were assigned the duty of burning in the Forum these memorials of illustrious talent. Presumably Domitian thought that those flames destroyed the voice of the Roman people, the freedom of the Senate, the moral consciousness of mankind; he went on to expel from Rome the teachers of philosophy and drove into exile all liberal teaching to prevent any trace of goodness meeting his eyes.' Domitian's attempt to exterminate adverse thought might have succeeded before printing existed. It failed; to-day it would be hopeless. Literature—in the first century A.D. a small river—has grown partly through the natural additions to it, partly through its dissemination by printing, into a vast ocean where all the thoughts which have crossed the mind of man through three millennia can be found, swimming on the surface or easily dredged up from the depths. Here, in countless forms, are conservatism, liberalism, communism, anarchy, atheism, agnosticism, religion in its many forms, every system of morals, every view of life or of th

<sup>1</sup> *Agricola*, 2.

state. This ocean is round us and no one can hold the human spirit back from sounding in its depths—the human spirit, unquiet and curious, and grown still more so, since the day when Eve made her decision and accepted the serpent's offer; 'your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil'.

But it is as important to distinguish good and evil as to know them: and, at least for educated persons in the democratic countries, this is the real problem. Our danger is not too few but too many opinions; not to be penned in a single belief but to be puzzled by innumerable alternatives; not a closed mind but an irresolute one; to drift unanchored from one station to another, from deeps to shallows, from safe water to the rocks; an incapacity to refuse the evil and choose the good. A major task of education is to help to the right choice.

## CHAPTER V

### TWO DRAGONS IN THE ROAD

STANDARDS, right values, the science of good and evil—to implant these is an essential part of education. Many forces thwart this work, but two of the most serious hindrances to it are examinations and specialisation.

The examination system is both an opiate and a poison. It is an opiate because it lulls us into believing that all is well when most is ill. 'Look', the public says, 'at this list of scholarships; see how many children have got their School Certificate: something is clearly happening; the school is doing its job.' Something no doubt is happening; but it may not be education: it may be the administration of a poison which paralyses or at least slows down the natural activities of the healthy mind. The healthy human being, finding himself a creature of unknown capacities in an unknown world, wants to learn what the world is like, and what he should be and do in it. To help him in answering these questions is the one and only purpose of education. But that is not the prime aim of the ordinary pupil who is working for a School or Higher Certificate or for a scholarship or a degree, and for whom the examination becomes much more important than seeing

'visions of greatness', and 'getting through' excuses all shortcomings and disguises all omissions. I am speaking here throughout of external examinations, not of those set by the school, as *tests of progress, which are useful and necessary*. Examinations are harmless when the examinee is indifferent to their result, but as soon as they matter, they begin to distort his attitude to education and to conceal its purpose. The more depends on them, the worse their effect. For disinterestedness is the essence of all good education, and liberal education is impossible without it.

It is not suggested that nothing is learnt and no education received in working for an examination; that would be obviously untrue. But, to recur to my previous metaphor, the examination system is a poison which slows down education in most cases and in some paralyses it, and no one wholly escapes its bad effects. The slow or stupid child suffers most, since preparing for the ordeal occupies more of its time and mind; and for some intelligent but nervous children examinations become an obsession. But the keenest student knows the sense of relief when he finishes his last examination and feels himself free to read and study what interests him simply because it is interesting, without any thought of what he is 'expected to know' or 'what may be set'. The blinkers are gone; he can look round with unrestricted eyes; and he knows how

the young Athenian felt who answered Socrates' question whether they should pursue a certain intellectual inquiry: 'Should we, do you say? Are there any pleasures worth living for like these?'<sup>1</sup>

It is not only the pupil but—and this is far more serious—the teacher, who finds his energies and attention drawn from education to examination needs. No doubt there are schools and teachers which resist the insidious pressure, teach their subject for its interest and for nothing else and burn no incense on the examination altar. But the pressure is hard. Most people judge a school by its examination results. Its reputation, however well-established, is affected by them; and a school with a name to make or competitors to face has an overpowering temptation to commend itself to the world by obtaining as many Scholarships and School and Higher Certificates as possible. Such results are intelligible to Boards of Governors and to the general public, and are generally expected by them. The teacher is tempted to show his competence by securing a big list of awards, the headmaster is tempted to demand them in the interest of the school:

Things done, that took the eye and had the price,  
O'er which, from level stand,  
The low world laid its hand  
Found straightway to its mind, could value in a trice.

<sup>1</sup> *Phaedrus*, 258.

And, apart from this, however idealistic headmaster or teacher may be, they must reflect that a pupil's future in life may depend on an examination result and that their duty is to see that he is successful.

Any evils that might follow from the disappearance of examinations are nothing to the harm they do. They are in fact a refined form of the old and now universally condemned system of 'payment by results'; but whereas under it the payment was a money grant to the school, under the examination system it takes the form of prestige to the school and to the pupil, and (in the case of scholarships) a money payment to the latter. The examination system has the same bad effect on education as that produced by 'payment by results'. A historian of English education describes the effect of 'payment by results' as follows: 'The "results" procured were far too frequently mechanical results. It encouraged the neglect of the moral and other spiritual factors which constitute the most valuable parts of all education.'<sup>1</sup> He goes on to point out that the system restricted the field of education by causing schools to concentrate on 'profitable' subjects. Each of these charges can be brought against examinations. They procure 'far too frequently mechanical results'. They encourage 'the neglect of the moral and other spiritual factors

<sup>1</sup> Adamson, *Short History of Education*, pp. 307, 308.

which constitute the most valuable parts of education'. 'Subjects can have meaning only as they are treated as aspects of active and living human experience. Whether, if considered from this point of view, they can continue to be examinable in the traditional manner is at least an open question.'<sup>1</sup> It is as impossible to examine in the most vital parts of education as to anatomize life on a dissecting table, and therefore the pressure of examinations continually pushes them into the background or out of sight. Further, it tends to restrict education to the subjects of the examination in question, with disastrous results in the case of examinations for university scholarships. I recently asked two mathematical scholars at Oxford who came from different schools how much time they had given during their last school year to other subjects than science and mathematics. In both cases the answer was 'one hour a week'. What an education: bad for the scholarship winners, but they at least had their reward; worse still for those whose education had been narrowed to win a scholarship and who failed to win one! I asked one of the latter class, who had tried unsuccessfully for a scholarship in science, what proportion of his time had been given to other subjects. The answer was 'six periods out of forty-two in the week'. It trans-

<sup>1</sup> Professor Kandel in *The Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education*, p. 427.



pired that the only English literature read in the small time allotted to other subjects than his specialisation was Ibsen's *Ghosts*, a work presumably selected for its supposed connection with science, and considered to be English literature because it had been translated into English. Contrast with this miserable education the training given before the last war in the *Oberrealschule*, the secondary school in which the future scientists of Germany were educated, and in which less than half the time was allotted to science and mathematics: in the highest class eleven periods out of thirty-one were given to them, and the rest to other subjects.

Unfortunately there is a risk of the importance of examinations increasing. Already, when a boy's parents cannot afford to send him to a secondary school or a university, his whole life may depend on an examination result, and this is bad for him and for education. However disinterested he or his teacher may be, neither can forget what is at stake. As a boy of twelve I was a candidate for an Eton scholarship (which I failed to get), but my chief memories of the episode are of the roast mutton in College Hall and of eating strawberries in the playing fields. That is the right spirit in which to take an examination. My feelings at the time and my surviving memories would have been very different if my future had depended on getting a

scholarship. But the number of people who will be able to take examinations in a light-hearted way seems likely to decrease.

We are moving from a society where men as a whole have been born to a certain condition of life and normally have accepted it, to a society, based as we hope on justice, where everyone will find the place to which his character and abilities entitle him. Well and good. But how easily such a society may become acutely competitive! Everyone must find his *right* place, everyone will desire to find it, and, unless human nature changes, will wish his place to be as high as possible. What possibilities of intense competition that suggests! And how will he find his place? How but by examination? And if so, education becomes a savage competitive system. It ceases to be education and becomes a road to a career. Shakespeare is read, not because he is Shakespeare, but because he is an examination subject in a syllabus, and the child who reads him sees behind the figures of Cordelia or Juliet or Hamlet or Lear the possibility of an examination question which may admit him to the university and determine the course of his life.

We should therefore adapt the wording of a historic motion in the House of Commons and resolve that the influence of examinations has increased, is increasing, and ought to be diminished, and in pursuance of this principle we should restrict

their power and as far as possible use the school record and the interview as a substitute or part-substitute. It is impossible to get rid of them altogether; they are inevitable, I am afraid, for university scholarships and for primary university degrees, and in cases where a small selection has to be made out of a large number of candidates. Here we must endure what we must and minimise what we can. But it is difficult to see any conclusive reason why the most baneful of them, the School Certificate, should exist. It does most damage, because it affects most children and distorts secondary education almost from the first. If we are told that some business men believe that a School Certificate is better evidence of a child's capacities than its school record and its teacher's testimonial, we must reply that the education of thousands of children ought not to be spoilt each year for such a superstition. The School Certificate had its uses when it was first instituted. It replaced a multitude of external examinations; the standard of teaching in some schools was low, and an external examination imposed on all schools was the best way of raising its level. To-day its work has been done; standards have been raised and established; and, under adequate inspection and with a prescribed curriculum, education may be allowed to replace the examination.<sup>1</sup> To say that without it the teacher

<sup>1</sup> The Spens Report (pp. 254 f.) condemned it, but unfortunately failed to sentence it to death.

cannot teach, and that the pupil will not learn, is to insult both and to ignore facts. Elementary and technical schools can do their work without the spur of an examination. Why should it be indispensable in secondary schools?

The second dragon in the path of true education is specialisation, which normally begins at sixteen. Life is more specialised than it was and more special knowledge is needed to live it competently. Further, limited specialisation after sixteen is educationally beneficial. But it has dangers, and it becomes disastrous when, in fact if not in theory, it excludes the wider human and spiritual interests, when these are ignored and slowly atrophied, when the pupil becomes a mere scientist or mathematician, a mere historian or modern linguist or classic. Then the adolescent suffers from the disease that so often attacks the man who is absorbed in his special occupation and becomes a mere industrialist, a mere economist, a mere civil servant, a mere grocer or artisan. Though there is plenty of materialism in England, the English are not fundamentally materialists. But the specialist tendency in education leads to materialism in effect, though not in intention. A boy takes to modern languages because they will be 'useful in after life', or to chemistry and physics because he intends to enter industry; or he must read the pre-registration subjects at school, so that he can start his full medical course at the university. Unless care is taken, the

whole atmosphere of his education changes; the stress is on vocation, not on education; the liberal, human, spiritual element gives way to practical need and material advantage. The danger of specialisation varies with the subject. Some subjects imply, if they do not impart, a spiritual view of life; some subjects do not—or do so in a limited and inadequate way or to an infinitesimal extent. Over-specialisation in mathematics and science is, from this point of view, the more dangerous. It is indeed deplorable if students in languages, literature and history have no chance of at least keeping in touch with science through their secondary school course. To know nothing of science is to be, so far, intellectually maimed. But the background of their studies is human conduct and human ideals. What else is the subject of literature and history? The subject of science is different; it deals with the material world and the material aspects of man; the rest of him—that is nine-tenths of him—is not its business. Over-specialisation in it tends to produce scientists who are admirable technicians but no more, and who therefore lack the influence outside their subject, which its importance and the interest of the community demands.

Specialism is bad at school; it increases at the university. If Professor Whitehead is right in saying that 'moral education is impossible without

the habitual vision of greatness', then the moral education of most persons becomes of little importance when they have obtained a School Certificate, and practically ceases when they reach the University, where the student is absorbed in science or economics or some other specialism, and is often unconscious that there is anything else in the world, just as in later life and on a lower level some men are absorbed in making money, equally unaware of other aims or interests. But the quality of a civilisation does not depend only on its science, economics or sociology but even more on its standards, values, ideals, its sense of what is first-rate in life, its religion. We act too often as if these, so far as education is concerned, belong to a period that ends with the school, or at latest the Higher Certificate, and when these have been passed, feel that we have done enough and can safely settle down to the serious business of medicine or science or economics or sociology.<sup>1</sup>

This disastrous practice has actually been erected into a principle by Professor Dewey, whose influence on American education has been great and in some ways unfortunate, and who urges 'the

<sup>1</sup> 'There is a considerable number of secondary schools in which the subject (religious instruction) is not included in the time-table of the higher Forms. In some of the latter religious instruction is discontinued in the Sixth Form only; in others it is discontinued in the year in which the School Certificate Examination is taken, or even earlier.' *Report of the Consultative Committee on Secondary Education* (1938), p. 207.

demarcation of secondary work as the period of general training and culture, thus making it the period of the knowledge of self in relation to the larger meanings of life; and the reservation of the higher institution for specific training, for gaining control of the particular body of knowledge and methods of research which fit the individual to apply truth to the guidance of his own special calling in life'.<sup>1</sup> There speaks the voice of an age concentrated on means and indifferent to ends. Shrouded in the decent obscurity of Professor Dewey's English, his theory may shock us less than if it was exposed naked in plain language, but in effect it says: 'when your secondary education ends, you can drop culture and the "larger meanings of life": philosophy, history, literature are done with (unless of course you are specialising in them, when you will approach them as a "body of knowledge" for which special methods of research are required); you will have solved their problems and penetrated their mysteries; dismiss them and absorb yourself in your profession.'

An admirable description of our practice, but how disastrous an ideal! As if there was any 'period' for 'the knowledge of self in relation to the larger meanings of life'; as if this knowledge could be more than begun in the 'secondary' stage of education! Say, if you believe it, that 'the larger

<sup>1</sup> *Education To-day*, p. 52.

meanings of life' are unimportant, but do not pretend that their study can be completed at school and therefore abandoned when we pass to the university.

It is to be hoped that we shall neither say the one nor pretend the other. It is indeed impossible and undesirable to abolish specialisation, but we can prevent it from becoming a cancer whose growth destroys studies essential to human beings as citizens and as men. Taking Professor Dewey's belief that the secondary stage in education is 'the period for the knowledge of self in relation to the larger meanings of life', we should revise it in the light of Plato's simpler and infinitely profounder words: 'The noblest of all studies is the study of what man is and of what life he should live.' We shall not agree with Professor Dewey that this 'noblest of all studies' can be completed in secondary education, but determine that, in some form or another, it is indispensable in every period of education from the nursery to the grave, and see that 'the higher institution' includes it, and is not entirely reserved for 'gaining control of the particular body of knowledge and methods of research which fit the individual to apply truth to the guidance of his own special calling in life'.

So far as I know, the only universities in Britain that make definite and deliberate provision for this are the Scottish, and these do so only partially and



imperfectly. Philosophy in them must be taken by all students for the *pass* degree. But this does not apply to honours students, and philosophy is generously interpreted to include such subjects as economics, and in any case may be taken in the form of logic as well as moral philosophy and metaphysics. But those who read the two latter subjects are at least confronted in their university with 'the larger meanings of life' and 'the noblest of all studies'. Outside the Scottish universities no such provision exists; and the result in some cases is, as a professor in a new university famous for its work in applied science said to me, that 'we are turning out graduates who are barbarians'. That judgment may be too severe, but there is enough truth in it to merit attention.

The real remedy is a change of heart as much as a change of curriculum, a sense of our defects and their dangers. Plato wrote over the entrance of his Academy: 'Let no one enter who is ignorant of geometry.' An admirable motto, though it might exclude some otherwise deserving scholars! But perhaps at the moment we require a rather different one to inscribe over the doors of our schools and universities. I would suggest either the words from Plato quoted on the last page, or a choice from one of the two following sayings. 'By education I mean that training in excellence from youth upwards which makes a man passionately desire

to be a perfect citizen, and teaches him how to rule, and to obey, with justice. This is the only education which deserves the name; the other sort of training, which aims at the acquisition of wealth or bodily strength, is not worthy to be called education at all.'<sup>1</sup> 'Whatever the world thinks, he who hath not much meditated upon God, the human mind, and the *Summum Bonum*, may possibly make a thriving earthworm, but will certainly make a sorry patriot and a sorry statesman.'<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 643 f.

<sup>2</sup> Berkeley, *Siris*.

## CHAPTER VI

### EDUCATION FOR CITIZENSHIP

GREECE is the mother of education for citizenship, as of so much else. Ancient Sparta devised the most complete and ruthless discipline ever conceived for turning men into citizens and soldiers, but Athens too had her more liberal methods of civic education, and though Pericles says that she did not rely on 'rigorous training' and 'state-made courage', he claims that his countrymen 'attend both to public and private duties and do not allow absorption in their own business to interfere with knowledge of the state's affairs'.<sup>1</sup> If we were asked what training in citizenship Britain gives, we might hesitate for an answer. In the last century, if the idea occurred to anyone, it interested very few: there is one reference to it in the index of an important book like Adams's *Evolution of Educational Theory* and none in Norwood's *English Tradition in England* or Nunn's *Education; its Data and First Principles*.<sup>2</sup> The foundation of the Association for Education in Citizenship in 1935 is perhaps the first sign of a general recognition, not only that there is such a subject but that it is very important.

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II. 39, 40 (tr. Zimmern).

<sup>2</sup> Sir Percy Nunn's book however touches on the subject of citizenship without using the word (pp. 97-8) and the *Syllabuses in-Use in the Demonstration Schools of London Day Training College* (1912) includes an admirable syllabus by him for teaching it.

Citizenship goes far beyond voting, paying taxes, sitting on a jury and the other duties expected by a nation from its members. Properly conceived, it involves all a man's actions which touch his fellow-citizens, and affect the health and well-being of the State; it is almost co-extensive with his duty to his neighbour. It includes everything which the law requires but also many duties about which it is silent and which are left to the individual conscience. It is not passive, not mere abstention from uncivic conduct. It is active. 'We regard the man who holds aloof from public duties not as "quiet" but as useless.'<sup>1</sup> 'Public life is a situation of power and energy; he trespasses against his duty who sleeps upon his watch as well as he that goes over to the enemy.'<sup>2</sup> The ideal state is one where every citizen is determined to be a part of the community, to share its burdens, to put its interest before his own, to sacrifice, if need be, his own wishes, convenience, time and money to it. It is a machine of which no part is idle or inefficient, none rusted, broken or ill-fitting, in which each pulley and cog takes up its full share of the load, and plays its part in the swift and smooth running of the whole. A man who evades his taxes is, so far, a bad citizen; but so is one who, in giving a vote for parliament, thinks only of his private

<sup>1</sup> Pericles (Thucydides, II. 40).

<sup>2</sup> Burke, *Thoughts on the Cause of the Present Discontents*.

interests, or is too indifferent or lazy to vote at all; so is the bad employer, whose treatment of his employees is not only a breach of the moral law, but adds to the social problems of the country; so are profiteers and the traders and clients of the 'black market'; so are workmen, who strike for some private interest when the existence of their country is at stake; so is the man who would be useful in local government but evades the burden, not because he cannot, but because he will not, spare the time.

There is plenty of bad citizenship in Britain, but there is probably more good citizenship here than in any other country, though it is not always labelled by that name. It appears in the numberless gifts and legacies for charitable and kindred objects, and in the uncounted instances where private effort performs duties of public interest, ranging from the Zoological Society to the care of the blind, from the Life-Boat Institution to the Scout Movement, from the preservation of scenery and historic buildings to the work of the Motoring Associations; look through the twenty-eight pages of Societies and Institutions in *Whitaker's Almanac* if you wish to see how many national activities depend on individual enterprise. There are idle rich in Britain, but they are fewer than the less conspicuous class of wealthy or well-to-do persons, who might live wholly selfish lives but who give

time and money without stint to public service. A nation where all the universities have been created by private initiative, where municipal government and the administration of justice is largely carried on by unpaid work, where nearly half of the hospitals are managed and financed by private enterprise, where the Co-operative Movement was organised, where a third of the peace-time army is recruited by civilians giving up their leisure time to military training, where the Home Guard immediately created itself in response to public need, is not wanting in the spirit of good citizenship.

This spirit is the blood in a country's veins; where it is pure and flows strongly, national life will be healthy and vigorous, where it is thin or tainted, anaemia will be present and may pass into death. Important at any moment, it is most of all now, for we shall hardly survive the tensions of social change, certainly we shall not survive as a democracy, unless we have the community sense which will hold us together and enable us to move as a whole.

How can the spirit of citizenship be created or developed? How are good citizens made? This is part of the obscure and important question, where do men get their virtues? From what deep sources are drawn the courage and sacrifice shown in the air, by sea, on land? Where do the in-

habitants of, for instance, Bermondsey or Bow, many of them living in intolerable surroundings, learn the qualities which enable them in peace to be decent, kindly people, and in war cheerfully to face the ruin of their homes and death from the air? How are such virtues to be preserved and extended? And, on the other hand, whence come our weaknesses and how shall we cure them—commercialism that sells beauty and debases standards for money, profiteering in every class and rank, partisanship and reckless statements in politics and outside it, the intellectual's betrayal of truth? Here are problems deserving inquiry more than many sociological studies, and very *relevant to our future*.

Citizens are made, not born; though men may be social animals, they are very apt to regard society as made for them, and as far as possible to use it for their own ends. It is an individual, not a member of a community, that issues from the womb, though these individuals have to live in the State and must learn how to do it. All human beings have the capacity to be citizens, but mere capacity is not enough; it needs developing and training. The vocational and personal sides of education will help little here. Men must learn how to earn their living; they must have the chance of developing body, mind and character to their full capacity. But earning a living and developing

a personality are private matters, a concern of the individual; they will make a man a more useful member of the State but not necessarily a better citizen; they are no guarantee that he will serve it, study its interests, carry out his duties to it. Indeed if over-emphasised they may—and obviously often do—make him selfish and indifferent to the common good. Vocational and personal training are dangerously incomplete without the discipline which teaches men how to play their part in the State and makes them wish to do it. Education is a trinity, and one of its members is training in citizenship.

There are three elements in this training, of which the first and least important is teaching people the duties of a citizen and how to perform them. Mention education for citizenship, and the word 'civics' will probably rise into the mind; instruction on such subjects as 'the functions and institutions of government, both local and central, including Education, Public Health, Justice, Police, the Post Office, and the Defence Services, and the everyday work of local councils and of Parliament'.<sup>1</sup>

Eric Gill says in his *Autobiography*: 'The whole of my education was simply learning things out of little books and being able to remember enough to answer questions.' It is a common form of

<sup>1</sup> *The Extra Year*, p. 114.



education. He continues: 'We are educated by the doing not by the learning and that is the whole secret of education, whether in schools or in workshops or in life.'<sup>1</sup> These warnings should be remembered in considering the teaching of citizenship. At school instruction of the kind proposed is apt to be little beyond 'learning things out of little books'; at that stage there is no opportunity for 'doing'. The subject has a specious attraction, and is sometimes described as up-to-date, realistic and related to the actual needs and life of the pupil. But though apparently practical, it is in fact purely academic. It consists almost entirely in imparting facts which have no relation to the actual life of the pupil, knowledge of which he can make no immediate use. The fact that he is being educated does not mean that he will find the educational system of the country interesting; he takes no part in the work of local councils and of parliament; and if he does not happen to be criminal, he will have no first-hand experience of either justice or the police. Unless he has a retentive memory or lively imagination, the facts learnt will fall on his mind like dust, and, like dust, will in a few months or less be swept from it by succeeding impressions, leaving perhaps a few grains of knowledge behind. The clever pupil will retain more, but is likely to derive from his studies little beyond some up-to-date knowledge

<sup>1</sup> pp. 26, 28.

of facts, a vague plausibility about social questions, and a misleading belief that he understands them. For politics and government are essentially practical subjects, wearing very different faces in books and in life. Our views on them are of small value unless we have seen them at first-hand, and a schoolboy has not seen them at first-hand.

We must therefore not expect much from this form of instruction in citizenship. A certain amount of it is useful. In the hands of an inspired teacher, 'civics', like any other subject, can become a means of real education. But citizenship is better taught in a broader way and through the normal subjects of the school curriculum.<sup>1</sup> The most fruitful part of 'civics' in the narrower sense will probably be such things as visits to town councils, law-courts, parliament, factories, a slum, a distressed area, a housing estate, etc.—when possible, abroad as well as at home. This will not impart knowledge so much as strike the imagination by a glimpse into the real thing. It is not more than a glimpse; such visits show the outside rather than the inside of problems, their existence, not their infinitely complicated conditions, but they leave in most minds a picture, a sense of real problems waiting to be solved such

<sup>1</sup> There are valuable suggestions and discussions of the subject in *Education for Citizenship in Secondary Schools* (published under the auspices of the Association for Education in Citizenship); I do not agree with all its conclusions.

as all the 'little books' on civics will fail to give.

But, it will be said, the citizen needs more than that: he ought to know something about the machinery of government and the fabric of his civilisation, and at present we fail to give him this. Certainly: but school is not the time or place to give it. It should be given when it can be used, when men and women are citizens, with votes for parliament and local government, which cannot be given effectively without knowledge and, if given effectively, can change the conditions of their life. That is the time when the knowledge is needed, is welcomed—and is not available. 'We have been told', says the report quoted above, 'that in Senior Schools, it is the citizenship lesson in which the parents show most interest and themselves provide information and send up questions for answer.'<sup>1</sup> Those words indicate our neglected opportunity. Here are adults eager to learn about citizenship, unprovided with natural means to do so, and obtaining some knowledge indirectly through the lessons given to their children. But the senior school is not the best medium for teaching citizenship to men and women, nor have all adults access to it. What lovers of paradox we British are! Youth studies but cannot act; the adult must act, and has no opportunity of study; and we accept

<sup>1</sup> *The Extra Year*, p. 115.

the divorce complacently. But action and thought, living and learning naturally belong together and should go hand in hand. Instruction in civics at school, if you will. But when the children are adults and have votes, let such instruction be available so that their votes can be used with intelligence. Our local government is not, in every city, the most successful of our institutions. It might be improved if every elector had an opportunity of learning something about its nature and scope, and if perhaps the newly elected City or County Councillor, instead of being thrown headlong into his duties, to learn slowly what the sea is like by swimming in it, was given some instruction in the character and variety of this vast ocean; if, in fact, we did for our municipal rulers, as much as we do for an A.R.P. Warden; for local government is as complicated and important as fire-fighting. But this is a matter for Adult Education, hitherto so neglected in this country. At present we either fail to give our citizens the knowledge which citizens need, or push into the schools as much of it as we can manage, upsetting their curriculum and giving it at an age when it cannot be digested. We act like people who should try to give their children in a week all the food they require for a year; a method which might seem to save time and trouble, but would not improve digestion, efficiency or health. Some day, no

doubt, we shall abandon this practice and give everyone a chance of thinking about life when he is facing it and about its problems when he has to solve them. When that day comes, we shall stop one of the chief sources of educational waste and inefficiency, and make the greatest advance in our history towards the creation of an educated democracy.

But even when 'civics' is taught and taught at the right age, our task is only beginning. Knowledge of political institutions, interest in social problems and current events will not of themselves make good citizens. Pascal says, 'How far it is from the knowledge to the love of God!' We may say, 'How far it is from civics to citizenship!' We must not make the error of Socrates and think that knowledge is virtue, or that duties are performed because they are known. To study the outlines of the government of the country, to visit city councils and law courts, to have an acquaintance with economics, public affairs and current events—all this barely touches the problem. Citizenship is not information or intellectual interest, though these are part of it; it is conduct not theory, action not knowledge, and a man may be familiar with the contents of every book on the social sciences without being a good citizen.

In citizenship, as in so many provinces in life,

we provide means, teach their use, but give no sense of ends; tell people how to reach the goal but leave them ignorant and doubtful of the goal itself; like persons going on a holiday, who pack their clothes, collect journey money, food, golf clubs and tennis rackets, bring the car to the door or arrange transport to the station, and then discover that they have never decided where to go. That is impossible with holidays but common with life: and training for citizenship may include 'the Monarchy and what it stands for; the Houses of Parliament and their work, to include a short history; General Elections; the Public Services—the Army, Navy, Air Force, Police, Post Office, Ministry of Labour',<sup>1</sup> and much else, yet fail to give any vision of what the State should be.

Without such a vision, the knowledge may be misused or used blindly, the means wasted for lack of the right end. Not only so, but the chief impulse to action is lost. Here, as in every sphere of life, knowledge and intellectual equipment, without an ideal to drive them, are machinery without power, and there are few more melancholy or more common sights than admirable social machinery which cannot get up enough steam to work it. The sight of an inspiring goal gives the desire to reach it, and men devise means, when they are mastered by the passion for an end. Aristotle

<sup>1</sup> *The Extra Year*, p. 120 f.

thought that God was the source of motion in the world, not by any direct intervention but by the response of human beings to the vision of himself. 'If God is always in that good state in which we sometimes are, this compels our admiration; and if in a better state, this compels it still more. And God *is* in a better state. . . . So he produces motion by the love he excites. . . . On this principle depend the heavens and the world of nature.'<sup>1</sup> Something of the sort is true of those visions of good which are called ideals. They have been the great sources of motion in the world, created its religious movements, made or helped its revolutions, and inspired its greatest men. Such visions 'compel our admiration and move us by the love they excite'.

This element, small in bulk, easily and quickly imparted, yet vast in importance, must not be overlooked and forms the second element in training for citizenship. People must have a vision of the ideal State, 'the holy City, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven', that they may know the goal of their quest and desire to reach it. A bible of citizenship might well be compiled containing the great visions of the meaning of the word. It would surely contain two passages which sum up the chief articles of the creed of citizenship—duty to country and (a more neglected obligation) duty to fellow citizens. The

<sup>1</sup> *Metaphysics*, 1072 b.

first extract is from the speech delivered by Pericles in 431 B.C. at the public funeral of the Athenians who had fallen in the Peloponnesian war:

Fix your eyes on the greatness of your country as you have it before you day by day, fall in love with her, and when you feel her great, remember that her greatness was won by men with courage, with knowledge of their duty, and with a sense of honour in action, who, even if they failed in some venture, would not think of depriving the country of their powers but laid them at her feet as their fairest offering.<sup>1</sup>

Anyone who has listened to addresses on patriotism or tried to compose one will realise the amount of thought as well as of feeling in these few words. Patriotism is 'falling in love' with one's country (the Greek word means passionate love), and love for a country, as for a human being, springs from some supreme attraction. Men fall in love with a country because of something great in it; this greatness was created by the courage and sense of duty and unlimited self-sacrifice of individual citizens, and it inspires others to these qualities and so is maintained and extended.

Another side of citizenship is stressed in the following passage in which it is defined as loving one's neighbour as oneself, and the State is re-

<sup>1</sup> Thucydides, II. 43. The word rendered 'powers' is the untranslatable *ἀρεταί*, a man's virtues, 'excellences', 'gifts' (see p. 99 f.).



garded not as a mixed collection of individuals but as a united and affectionate family.

Do not the worst evils in a state arise from anything that tends to tear it asunder and destroy its unity; and is anything better than whatever tends to bind it together and make it one? Now a state is bound together by sharing joy and sorrow, by all its citizens being equally glad or grieved on the same occasion of gain or loss. The best ordered state will be one where the largest number of persons use the words 'mine' and 'not mine', 'another's' and 'not another's' in the same sense; it will most nearly resemble a single person. When we hurt a finger, the whole organisation of the body, unified under the ruling elements in the soul, feels it and shares the pain of the single member. The best organised community comes nearest that condition, recognises as part of itself the good and evil fortunes of each individual citizen, and shares as a whole in his joy or pain. In other states a man may regard one colleague as a friend in whom he has an interest, and another as a stranger with whom he has nothing in common. But that cannot happen with us. Our citizens must regard everyone he meets as brother or sister, father or mother, son or daughter, grandchild or grandparent. And a further point. Will you not expect them, not merely to use these family names, but to behave as a real family? In our state when things go ill or well with any of its members, everyone will use the word 'mine' in the same sense and say that all is well or ill with himself.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Plato, *Republic*, 462 f. (tr. Cornford, slightly altered and shortened). Plato is speaking of the unity of feeling in his ruling class; but his words have a wider extension.

Such ideals are part of a training in citizenship: they are an indication of the goal and an inspiration to reach it. But it is possible to see visions of goodness without following them, and knowledge of the right does not inevitably lead to right action. As Burke remarked:

Men are wise with but little reflection, and good with little self-denial, in the business of all times except their own. We are very uncorrupt and tolerably enlightened judges of the transactions of past ages; where no passions deceive, and where the whole train of circumstances, from the trifling cause to the tragical event, is set in an orderly series before us. Few are the partisans of departed tyranny; and to be a Whig on the business of an hundred years ago is very consistent with every advantage of present servility. . . . Many a stern republican, after gorging himself with a full feast of admiration of the Grecian commonwealths and of our true Saxon constitution, and discharging all the splendid bile of his virtuous indignation on King John and King James, sits down perfectly satisfied to the coarsest work and homeliest job of the day he lives in.

Bibles of citizenship—like other bibles—though guides to a better world, are not transport to one. That journey must be done by men on their own feet, though with direction from those who best know the road.

Here we come to the third and the most important element in training for citizenship, which we do not wholly neglect but provide sporadically

and very incompletely. Citizenship, as I have urged, is practical not speculative, active not passive, an art not a theory—the art and virtue of living in a community. The good citizen, like the good soldier, has learnt to feel and act as a member of a body, to play his part in it, and, if need be, to sacrifice to it his interests and even his life, to do his duty to the State without compulsion and of his own free will. It is a difficult art, commoner perhaps in this country than in others, but not perfected, and needing to be learnt in every generation; a harmony of clashing forces—independence and respect for authority, individualism and teamwork, self-assertion, self-discipline and self-sacrifice, initiative and subordination. Knowledge of ‘civics’ will help men to practise it, ideals will inspire and show the goal. But Whitehead’s saying that moral education is impossible without the habitual vision of greatness needs to be completed by the remark of Aristotle that men acquire virtues, not by knowing what they are nor by talking about them nor by admiring and praising them but by practising them. We become punctual by continually being punctual, we acquire the habit of telling the truth by telling it; and we become good citizens by doing what good citizens do. Social virtue is learnt by social life. So its infant school is the family, where the members, living together, learn how to live together as members of a tiny

community. The smaller the family, the worse the school.

But families exist in all countries. Where have the British had the teaching which makes them not experts in the art but perhaps more expert than most peoples? I believe that much of the credit is due to religion. Foreigners recognise, even if we do not, the immense influence which Christianity has had on the national mind. Indeed, so far as we have a national mind at all, it has been mainly made by Christianity. For many hundred years most of the population of these islands heard its message preached. The conception of the Fatherhood of God, leads logically to the Brotherhood of Man; texts like 'Ye are members one of another' imply no doubt a wider citizenship than anything on earth, but they imply citizenship and enforce a sense of community. Men cannot listen to such words Sunday after Sunday without some trace of them remaining, even if it is only an ideal in the background of the mind, a pricking of the conscience, a call to the deeper side of their nature. Then too the nation has learnt much, painfully and with many failures, in a thousand years of history. It must have learnt something when Roman Catholics, Anglicans and Puritans managed to be loyal Englishmen in the days of Queen Elizabeth: more in the bitter struggles between 1640 and 1660: most of all perhaps in the admirable school

of parliamentary government, where men learn to fight without becoming enemies, to lose without resentment and to win without pushing victory too far, and where the verdict of a majority is accepted but the rights of the minority are not forgotten. These are among the schools where the English have had a general social education. But there are several institutions which give it in a specific form, institutions whose members learn the habit of citizenship by being citizens. The Scout and Guide Movement, the Boys' and Church Lads' Brigades, Boys' and Girls' Clubs, are among them. Another great school of citizenship in England is the Trade Union, where several millions of Englishmen learn to subordinate private wishes and opinions to a common policy, and a mass of individuals becomes a disciplined army. A strike may be inconvenient or even unjustifiable, but men who will throw up their work and livelihood for a common cause, possibly against their desire or even their judgment, have learnt one at least of the lessons of social education—how to act as a community.

But the greatest instrument of social education in England affects a different and much smaller though very important class. It is the so-called public school, which should rather be called the residential school. Whatever its weaknesses, it has by its very nature one great virtue. It is an incom-

parable school of social education, of citizenship, where boys learn citizenship by being citizens. That is what a public school boy is—a citizen. He has two countries—his school, a community of perhaps 600 boys, and his house, a community of some 50 boys. He is a member, a citizen of both these communities, and in each of them has his place and privileges and duties. He lives inside them for eight months of the year. Their problems, their interests, their happenings are before his mind on every day of those eight months. Never in later life will he be so intensely a member of a community, never again will he live so completely in and for a community, as he does in these school years. Living thus as a citizen he imbibes instinctively the fundamental principles of good citizenship. To feel yourself part of a community which you have a share and a responsibility in making, whose successes are somehow your successes and whose failures cast their shadow on you, to be able to obey and to live and co-operate with other members of the community, this is the essence of citizenship, and this the boy at a good residential school learns unconsciously every day of his life, not by being taught it, but by practising it. The state no doubt is small, but there is good hope that this habit of acting as a member of a community may become part of his nature and survive when he finds himself in that larger theatre

which is called a country and that still larger one which is called the world. Schools and trade unions may be narrowed to serve the interests or represent the views of a class. But this is not inherent in their nature, nor do these incidental weaknesses alter the fact that they create a spirit which may serve wider uses.

But the residential school does not provide for the masses of the nation, or for those boys who either cannot gain admission to it or whose parents prefer the day school. Where will they learn the virtues of the citizen by living as citizens?

One means is the nursery school. Plato thought that the State should educate children 'before they can understand language and are therefore incapable of appreciating any sort of instruction'; for the first 'three years are a considerable part of life to be passed ill or well'.<sup>1</sup> The nursery school is based on this idea though it takes children a little later and, while the character is as little set as the body, trains them by the mere attendance at school in the art of living in a community. Nursery schools, like all institutions, have dangers but there is no reason why they should impair family life and responsibility; they supply something which the small family cannot give, and they can do much to correct the disastrous influence of bad homes.

In the next stages the elementary school can be organised to give a practical training in citizenship,

<sup>1</sup> *Laws*, 791 f.

in so far as the teaching, interests and life of the school can centre in its neighbourhood. 'To be attached to the subdivision, to love the little platoon we belong to in society, is the first principle (the germ, as it were) of public affections' (Burke). At a later age the secondary day school can develop community life through school games, societies, camps and journeys abroad, etc. Here the British day school does far more for its pupils than similar institutions abroad, which limit education to the class room and consider their work done when lessons end. It is an unrecognised debt due to the residential school, from which the day school has learnt the value of extra-curricular activities, adapting them to its different circumstances. But whereas such activities are spontaneous and inevitable in the residential school, they could only be organised in the day school by the care, ingenuity and self-sacrifice of the staff, and they are one of the splendid things in British education. The good day school does everything in this direction which circumstances allow; but it can claim far less of a boy's time and life than a residential school and he is far less a citizen of it. Its weakness on this side can be seen in the newer universities, which, themselves mainly non-residential and drawing their students chiefly from non-residential schools, have in general little corporate spirit or corporate loyalty. They have done a great work in the country which must rely on



them for a large part of its future leaders, but they teach rather than educate.

The following extract from *The Times* of 29 November 1937, reveals a melancholy lack of spirit of citizenship in a highly educated class of the community:

Disappointment at the response to the ——— University's Extension Fund Appeal was expressed at the annual meeting of the Court of Governors to-day. The Vice-Chancellor said that 2800 copies of the Appeal had been sent to old students and only 79 had replied. It had been suggested, he continued, that old students should subscribe £1 a year for seven years, which was not an excessive amount, as most old students owed their present positions to the education they received at the university. The poor response might be partly due to the fact that students at provincial universities had become too much accustomed to receiving everything for nothing.

It is certainly surprising that, though the graduates of the university concerned had been mainly educated at public expense and largely owed their income and position to the university, there should have been so much lower a percentage of gratitude among them than among the ten lepers in the New Testament, of whom one expressed thanks for being healed. Whether such a spirit is common in other universities, I do not know.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> For an informed criticism of the newer universities see *The Universities in Transformation*, by A. Löwe (an important book) and *Blind Guides*, by D. M. Paton.

Whatever has been done, much remains to do. The only thorough provision, in our educational system, for training in citizenship is in the residential school—and that is unintentional. For the rest, however much the day school does, its conditions do not allow it to do as much as the nation needs, and in any case the mass of the population at present leave school at fourteen and in the future will leave it at fifteen or sixteen—ages at which training for citizenship is quite incomplete. What can we do?

The development of school camps will help; the Youth Movement has great possibilities. Still more will be done if some form of conscription or of national service persists after the war. It may take the shape of compulsory labour camps, which all members of the community must attend. They could give to the nation the training in community life which the residential school now gives to a few. They would make every Englishman 'work at least once with his hands and thus contribute towards the building up of his people. Above all, we want those who are in sedentary occupations to experience what manual labour is, so that they may feel understanding and sympathy for those of their countrymen whose lives are spent in the fields, the factory or the workshop. We want to abolish for ever that attitude of superiority which unfortunately so many of our intellectuals adopt

towards the manual workers,<sup>1</sup> and we wish them to realise that they too will be worth all the more if they know themselves to possess a capacity for physical work. But the ultimate aim behind labour service is to promote mutual understanding between the different classes, and thus strengthen the spirit of national solidarity among the whole people.' These are Hitler's words. But the fact that Hitler spoke them does not lessen their wisdom.

Our first task is to realise that the spirit of citizenship does not grow into a strong plant without cultivation; our problem will be solved when everyone born in Britain has the knowledge needed by a citizen, has seen the vision of what citizenship is, and has been trained in it by living with others, not merely as an individual, but as a member of a community whose life and responsibilities he shares. I have put these three requirements in inverse order. The most important is the last.

<sup>1</sup> I doubt if this is true of English 'intellectuals'.

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